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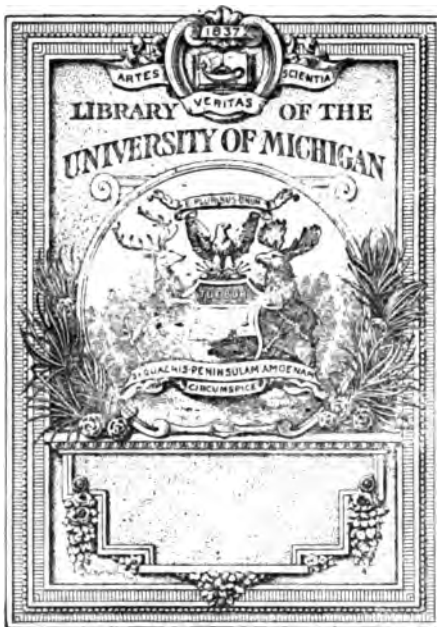
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STUDIES
OF
RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND CRITICISM.

BY
M. ERNEST RENAN,
MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE, AND AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF JESUS."

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH.
BY
O. B. FROTHINGHAM,
PASTOR OF THE THIRD UNITARIAN CHURCH
IN NEW YORK.

With a Biographical Introduction.



NEW YORK:
Carleton, Publisher, 413 Broadway.
PARIS: MICHEL LÉVY FRÈRES.

M DCCCLXIV.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1864, by
F. W. CHEISTERN,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

R. CRANGHEAD,
Printer, Electrotypist, and Electrosetter,
Carton Building,
21, 23 and 25 Centre Street.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

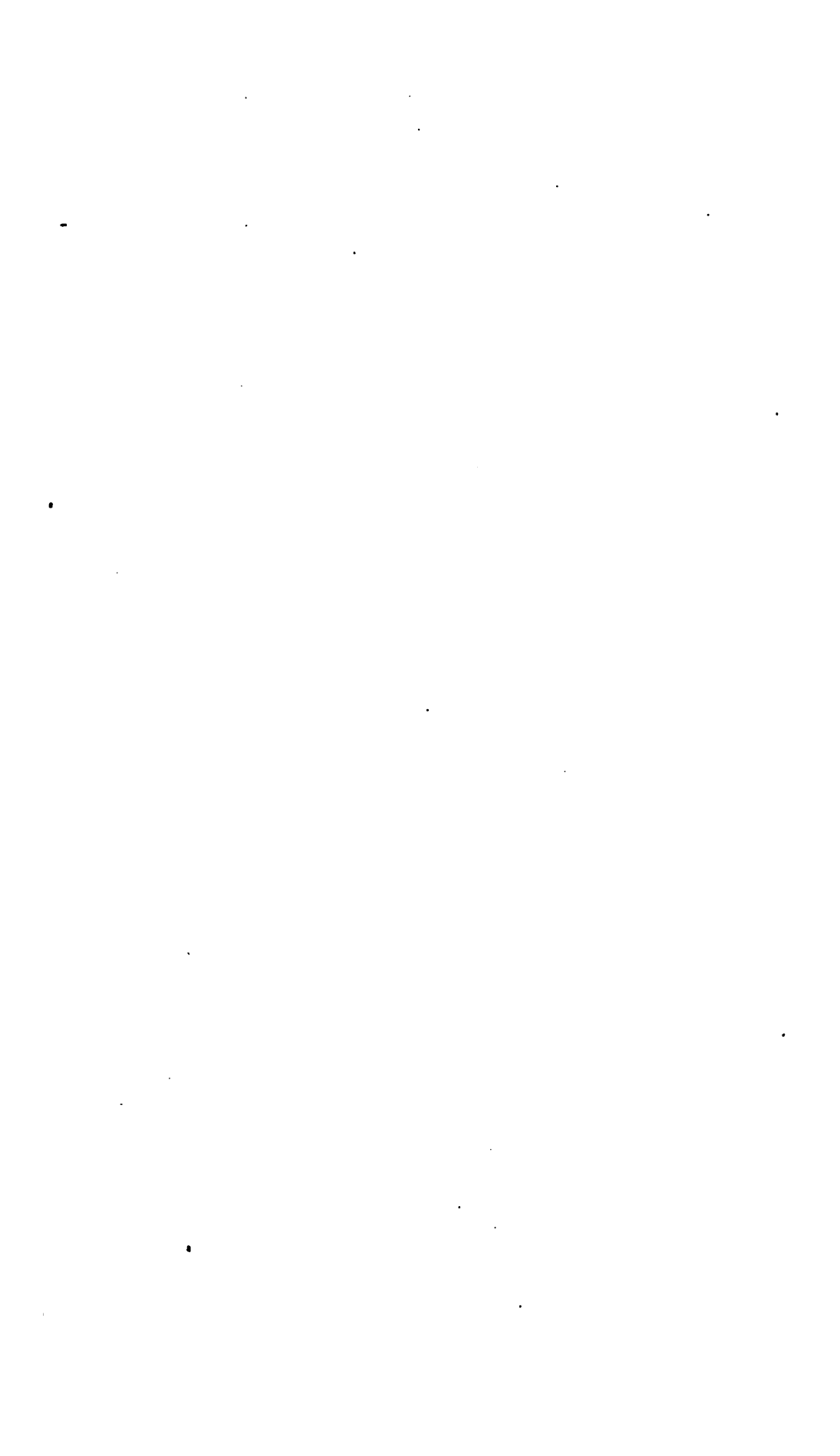
THE interest excited by the publication of M. RENAN'S "Life of Jesus" suggested the translation of this volume of Essays in which the critical principles and views of the author are explained and applied to other portions of his great theme. The plan has been submitted to M. Renan, and has received his cordial approval.

The Essays have been taken from the "Etudes d'histoire Religieuse," with the exception of the third, which is the famous Introductory Lecture in the College of France, and the last, which was published as an article in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, October 15th, 1860.

The account of M. Renan's life and labors has been carefully prepared by Mr. HENRI HARRISSE, of New York, a gentleman whom a long and intimate acquaintance with all M. Renan's works, an admiration of his genius, and a sympathy with his character, render peculiarly competent for the task.

Should this volume be greeted with welcome, other books from the pen of this great master of the modern French school of criticism may be offered to the public.

O. B. F.



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M. ERNEST RENAN.

"Le devoir du savant est d'exprimer avec franchise le résultat de ses études, sans chercher à troubler la conscience des personnes qui ne sont pas appelées à la même vie que lui, mais aussi sans tenir compte des motifs d'intérêt et des prétendues convenances qui faussent si souvent l'expression de la vérité."
ERNEST RENAN.

THE Faculty of the Theological Seminary of Saint Sulpice were once engaged in preparing their annual examinations, when a young candidate for the deaconship, who had always been noted for his great modesty and studious habits, asked leave to submit a number of questions which perplexed his mind, and seemed to depress his religious spirit. Unless they were solved to his satisfaction, he could not hope to enter into holy-orders! His earnestness astonished and alarmed the entire Faculty. They refused at once to examine questions which to them appeared novel or subversive; and justly fearing that a neophyte who on the threshold of the priesthood was besieged with such misgivings might become a cause of strife in the Church, they withheld their protection and bade him depart from the consecrated place.

This inquisitive and conscientious student was JOSEPH ERNEST RENAN. Born on the 27th of February, 1823, at Tréguier in Britany, of humble but respectable parentage, his boyhood had not been without hardships and privations. After several years of close application and success in the college of his native town, he was sent to Paris, and entered as a foundation scholar one of the primary theolo-

gical schools of the capital. At Saint Nicholas, as at Tréguier, he soon became noted as an acute, diligent and remarkably sedate student, who neglected all diversions, and kept aloof from his comrades. He went through the prescribed course in half the time allotted to it, and after obtaining the highest prizes in the gift of the institution was transferred to the Seminary of Issy.*

His mind and disposition were then already mature. Thoughtful in the extreme, distant without pride, and independent without dogmatism, ever ready to ponder, but unwilling to bow before authorities which carried in themselves no other weight than the dust of time, he ever endeavoured to probe all questions, and examine all opinions by the light of reason alone. Worried with doubts imparted by the very books which were to enlighten him, he took upon himself to study the philosophers who had been thrust out of the course. A new light then seemed to dawn on him, and he resolved to bring all subjects within the range of method and ratiocination. As a countryman of Abailard and Descartes, he could do no less.

Books open books, written thoughts unfold the mind, but fail to reach the inward recesses of the heart, which, in a man like Renan, needed nurture and consolations. The personal influence of a friend, sensible and congenial, teachings prompted by love and affection, alone could effect it. His sister Henrietta became the guide who soothed him in distress, and unfolded from her retreat beyond the Rhine, the radiant horizons which he never could have discovered from the loop-holes of the Issy Seminary. She was a very superior and highly educated woman, who resided in Germany, and conveyed to her younger brother not only counsels and encouragements, but thoughts and facts, doctrines and opinions, derived from a daily intercourse with the leading theologians and scholars of that country. It is thus that in early life he became acquainted with the works of Ewald, which have always exercised the greatest influence over his own doctrines.

The time had arrived when the course prescribed for all, required M. Renan to forsake science and metaphysics for theology, and to enter the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. It was in that celebrated institution that he gave the first indi-

cations of a remarkable faculty for the study of Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic. But if he devoted much time to the Oriental languages, and acquired as a linguist a reputation that extended beyond the walls of Saint Sulpice, it must not be inferred that he limited himself to the bare meaning and mechanism of words. He knew even then how to impart to his philological studies a character and importance which were fully revealed, when several years afterwards, he planned a general history of the Semitic languages. His first intention had been simply to give a survey of the grammatical system of the Semites, exhibiting the manner in which they succeeded in giving through the medium of speech a complete version of the process of thinking; but he was soon led to alter his plan. Language, said he, being the immediate result of human consciousness, follows its modifications; and therefore, the true theory of languages resides in their history. Even mere grammatical surveys imply an extensive knowledge of literary history. How can we give a complete exposition of the system of the Hebraic language without first establishing the chronology of the Hebrew texts? Can the seeming oddities of the Arabic grammar and dictionary be explained without knowing the circumstances under which the literary idiom of the Mussulman world was formed? The scientific theory of a family of languages consists, therefore, of two essential parts, viz. the external history of the idioms composing it, the part they have acted in space and time, their geography and chronology, the order of the written documents—and their internal history, the inorganic developments of their processes, their comparative grammars, viewed not in the light of an immutable law, but as the subject of perpetual changes.

Considered from such a stand-point, philological studies cease to require perseverance and memory only, and we can more easily appreciate the motives which may have prompted a thinker so bold and original to devote his entire life to a study which, in the opinion of many, seems to end in a field of threadbare technicalities. But his aspirations were not limited to the reputation of a great philologist, nor had he been matriculated at Saint Sulpice to excel in the Oriental languages to the exclusion of everything else; and at the close of the second year, he showed

himself such a thorough master of ecclesiastical history and of the early Fathers, that he was readily allowed to pass through the preliminary steps towards admission into holy orders.

Another year rolled on, every step in the study of the origins of the Church increasing his perplexity. It was in vain that he endeavoured to resist, his conscience repelled all attempts at conceding points which he deemed vital and absolute; and undaunted by the bleak prospects that awaited him if he once dared betray the least hesitation, he confessed his doubts to the eminent professors who presided over the institution. With what success, we have already seen. But if M. Renan was compelled to leave Saint Sulpice, he did not depart without preserving the esteem of his superiors; and it was through the influence of M. Dupanloup, then President of the Seminary, now Bishop of Orleans, and his most bitter opponent, that he obtained a situation as tutor in the college Stanislas. The drudgery of a lecture-room could but dampen his ardour, had he ever entertained the intention of submitting to it longer than was necessary to protect him from pressing wants. Impatient to carve out for himself an independent position, requiring every moment of his time and attention to attain his object, he soon left the college, and after an ordeal of poverty and privations, such as very few students were ever known to have endured, even in the Latin Quarter, he passed with the highest honors his examination for University Professor of Philosophy. He then sought by giving private lessons, the means of carrying out his favorite studies with that freedom which alone can develop genius and foster originality.

In France, knowledge and merit do not long remain unknown and unrewarded. There are many opportunities which every one can seize upon and work into means of acquiring influence, resources and fame. The prizes awarded yearly by the five Academies invariably go beyond the purse and crown of ivy leaves which are adjudged in so solemn a manner to the successful candidates. They open new careers, remove disabilities, and lead the way to preferment through life. Science itself becomes a gainer, for the Academicians, in preparing the lists of subjects and in setting forth the conditions of the

programme, do not so much keep in view the interests of the unknown scholar as the claims of a progressive science, which must not be allowed to depend merely on the initiative of the thinking world. A direction must be imparted to the intellectual efforts of the inquirer and the learned; and it is unquestionable that none can give the impulse better than the members of the French Institute. True it is that the conditions which they impose are often exacting in the extreme, and the tendency is to increase the burden still more, but the consequence of a rigor rendered necessary by the exigencies of the times, is only to thrust out of the arena those who cannot add to a thorough knowledge of the facts, original discoveries, and new combinations of thoughts presented in a form concise, forcible and elegant.

Despite the arduousness of the task, M. Renan was fully prepared to enter all the lists, for his proficiency now lay in the exact as well as in the philosophical sciences; but unwilling to compete for prizes which did not come fully within the range of his particular field of inquiries, he waited patiently until the Institute felt disposed to accept a philological subject, giving ample scope for critical investigations. At last the attention of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres was called to a memoir of his, in which he endeavoured boldly to do for the Semitic what Bopp had so successfully accomplished for the Hindoo-European languages. The year following (1847), M. de Tocqueville, in the name of the Academy, awarded him the coveted Volney prize and a gold medal. This memoir became the basis of a more extended work, which when published in its final form under the title of *General History and Comparative System of the Semitic Languages*, sealed M. Renan's reputation as one of the greatest orientalists France has produced since the days of Sacy and Burnouf.

It would prove interesting to follow M. Renan in his survey of the Semitic dialects, to show that they did not spring one from the other, and thus establish the hypothesis of a common prototype for all of them. We might then set forth his theory concerning the origin of languages, and how they spring into life in a state of completeness, and with an amazing complexity. Taking the development of the Semitic languages, which he divides into three historic parts, commencing with the Hebrew, from time imme-

morial to the sixth century before our era; the Aramean, till the seventh century after Christ; and finally, the Arabic, which ends by absorbing all the other dialects, we should be led to see the Hebrew occupying among the Semites a philological position analogous to that held by the Sanscrit in the Hindoo-European family; and to study the beauties of a language so rich in that order of ideas peculiar to the race and its aspirations. Thus it contains fourteen synonyms to express confidence in God, nine for the forgiveness of sins, twenty for the observation of the law; and withal it can boast of only five hundred primitive words or radicals! The literary history would also afford a vast field. From the supposed existence of an ancient Semitic literature, the old fragments in the historical books and psalms to the classic period under David and Solomon, and the new style inaugurated by the Prophets, we might ascertain the time when the Hebrew ceased to become a spoken language. M. Renan is inclined to place this event at the time of the Babylonian captivity, six centuries before Christ. But although no longer spoken, it remains in force as a written language, witnesses a revival under the Maccabees, absorbs Greek and Latin words, and finally, in the hands of the rabbis, assumes the form of an artificial and barbarous patois, with a goodly number of Spanish and Portuguese expressions that many Jews, to this day, repeat, devoutly believing them to be unadulterated Hebrew.

It is also in the *General History* that M. Renan sums up the results of his vast ethnological researches; beginning with the inferior races, which appeared on the globe at a time that geologists alone can ascertain. Those races entirely disappeared whenever they came in contact with the civilized races; for the Semites and Aryans found in the countries they sought to inhabit, semi-savage people which they exterminated. These, however, still survive in the myths of nearly all civilized nations under the form of magical or gigantic races. Then, according to M. Renan, came the first civilized races, as the Chinese in Eastern Asia, the Cuschites and Shamites in Western Asia and Africa, with a primitive civilization founded upon materialism and religious instincts imperfectly developed, and which possessing only crude notions in regard to art and elegance, showed

its characteristics in a literature devoid of ideality, monosyllabic languages without flexions and hieroglyphical writing; no military talents, no public spirit, but a perfect administration, and all energies turned towards trade and comfort. These races reckon from three to four thousand years of history, preceding the Christian Era. Afterwards, appeared the noble races, now called Aryan and Semitic, which came from the Himalaya Mountains. They came at the same time, the Aryan in Bactriana and the Semitic in Armenia, 2000 years B. C. Although originally inferior to the Cuschites and Shamites in regard to external civilization as exhibited in manual labours and administrative talents, they far surpassed them in vigour, courage and religious spirit. From the beginning, the Aryans overstepped the Semites in political and military aptitude, and afterwards in intellectual efforts, but the latter preserved for a long time their religious superiority, and finally brought all the Aryans to monotheistic ideas. Their task once accomplished, the Semitic races declined rapidly, and relinquished to them the destinies of mankind. Thus, Comparative Philology, with the help of Critical History, finally succeeds, if not in solving, at least in circumscribing the mysterious problem of the origin of mankind. It establishes, beyond a doubt, the unity of the Hindoo-European race, connects with it the Semitic and Cuschite, and shows the possibility of a perfect unity of all the races which have founded civilization in Western Asia, in Europe, in the North and East of Africa; fixes with almost a certainty the starting point of the Aryan race in the Himalaya Mountains, in which it is also disposed to place the cradle of the Semites, but hesitates to do the like for the Chinese, and especially for the inferior races which formed the first human stratum of the globe. It gives the chronological order in which these different races made their appearance in history; and with becoming modesty, finally proclaims "that in the actual condition of science, all systems can only be provisional, especially if we compare the little we know with the enormous mass of knowledge it is yet possible to acquire."

Later in life, when in a position to devote some of his time to purely scientific studies, which from his youth he favored so highly that he always regretted not to have

applied himself exclusively to them, M. Renan brought into the investigation of physical phenomena the ardour, skill, and ingenuity which stamp his philological and historic works with such originality. Familiar with the great discoveries of Claude Bernard, Bunsen and Kirkoff, Laurent, Pecelet, Berthelot, Pasteur, and that host of scientific men who have done so much for science, he strove to go beyond the history of the world as Comparative Philology depicts it to us, and to ascertain whether matter itself could not be interrogated or made to yield its quota of information in regard to the progressive modifications which may be said to have prepared the abode of mankind. It is interesting to bring together the above recapitulation and a condensed statement of his, which might be termed the history of primeval existence. We translate it from an article lately published in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*,* on the Natural and Historical Sciences.

- 1°. The period of atoms, existing at least in a virtual condition,—age of mere mechanical forces, but containing already the germ of all that was to follow ;
- 2°. The molecular period, when chemistry begins, and matter assumes distinct groups ;
- 3°. The solar period, when matter is collected in space, into colossal masses, all separated by enormous distances ;
- 4°. The planetary period, when in each of these systems, distinct bodies, which possess an individual development, detach themselves from the central mass, and when the planet Earth in particular begins to exist ;
- 5°. The period of the development of every planet, and especially of the Earth, through the successive evolutions which geology reveals, when life first appears, and botany, zoology, and physiology begin to have an object ;
- 6°. The period of unconscious human existence, which is revealed to us by comparative philology and mythology, and extending from the day when beings deserving the name of men began to exist, up to the historic times ;
- 7°. The historical period, which dawns in Egypt, and reckons about 5000 years, of which only 2500 have a certain continuity, whilst only the last 300 or 400 possess a full consciousness of the existence of the entire planet and of the whole of mankind."

However hypothetical as a whole, this cosmogony is evi

* Oct. 15, 1863.

dently true in its parts; and it has rarely happened that a man of imagination, and who devoted so much of his life to history, ethics and philosophy, has exhibited such a clear understanding of the results of modern science.

M. Renan's next attempt to emerge from obscurity proved equally successful. The opinion had long been held, even among scholars, that in consequence of the barbarian invasions, Western Europe had nearly lost its knowledge of antiquity, and ceased to study the Greek authors and language, which, when the two Churches divided the Roman world, were wholly forgotten. This, however, was a supposition which M. Renan proved to have been altogether erroneous, in a critical memoir on the study of the Greek Literature during the Middle-Ages, to which the French Institute awarded the first prize. Although occasionally quoted, it has not yet appeared in print. Soon afterwards (1848), he published an essay on the Origin of Language, which in 1852 assumed the proportion of an elaborate octavo volume. Opposed by Henry Ritter, but almost endorsed by Grimm, who himself gave, at the time of the reprint, a volume on the same subject with identical conclusions, M. Renan attempts in that work to solve this abstruse and difficult question, not by resorting to abstract considerations, as had been invariably the case, but by means of the science of Comparative Philology. He assumed that language was formed all at once, and sprang instantaneously from the creative genius of every race; granting, however, that the elements pre-existed, as in the bud or unexpanded blossom, the flower exists entire with all its essential parts, although the parts themselves are far from having attained their final form and fulness. This essay was followed by a publication of Sanchoniatho's Phœnician History.

Such constant and erudite labours could not fail to attract the attention of the dispenser of all governmental favours in France, as well as of the learned public; and in 1849, the Secretary of State sent him on a literary mission to Italy, from which he brought back the materials for a very remarkable work on Averroës and Averroism, which was republished in book form in 1852, at the request of M. Cousin. On his return, he was appointed assistant-librarian in charge of the Oriental manuscripts in the

National Library. Free henceforth from anxious cares, he applied himself with renewed ardour to the studies which formed the solace of his life; and in 1852, stood with éclat his final examination for Doctor of Philosophy, selecting as a thesis, *De Philosophia Peripatetica apud Syros*. He was at this time married to a daughter of Henry Scheffer, the great French painter.

It has always been one of the leading characteristics of the French journals to set a high value on literary contributions, and to open their columns to elaborate essays, often the first efforts of men destined in after life to occupy the highest rank in the science and literature of their country. When in the full enjoyment of a well earned reputation, so far from ceasing to write for the journals which brought them into notice, those grateful and now eminent publicists, take a certain pride in maintaining through life a connexion which enables them also to keep in constant contact with a public ever willing to peruse in the columns of a daily paper, essays which vie in importance with the most finished dissertations to be found in the leading European Reviews. On the other hand, the editors themselves, alive to the necessity of responding to a taste which has become general in France, strive to secure the writers of promise and talent whose assistance is calculated to add interest and value to their journal. The *Débats*, especially, has invariably been successful in discovering and securing contributors of uncommon literary abilities, who may be said to have attained through its columns a European reputation. The Bertins, a family of editors known for their great tact and foresight, and who have presided over the destinies of that celebrated paper for more than half a century, were not tardy in espying the latent abilities which M. Renan was soon to display as an original essayist and fearless critic. Availing themselves of the earliest opportunity, they placed him side by side with Messrs. de Sacy, Saint-Marc Girardin, Franck, Emile Littré, Laboulaye, and a number of thinkers, historians, scholars and critics, who take the lead in all that pertains to literature, science and criticism in France.

The numerous articles since published by M. Renan in *Les Débats* and some Reviews of high standing, like the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* and the *Journal des Savants*, dis-

play the soundest erudition, joined to a breadth of views and fearless independence which excite surprise and challenge admiration, when we consider the age of the author, his times and country. The most abstruse questions, the subjects which were supposed to belong exclusively to the domain of technical science, are elucidated in an eloquent manner, and placed, through a style of extreme clearness, within the reach of the vast majority of readers. The popularity of these essays was so marked, that a selection in two separate volumes soon attained a sixth edition. So great a success, unprecedented in works of such character, was mainly due to the extraordinary merit of the essays themselves; but it must be conceded that it may also be ascribed to the Preface, which, setting forth boldly the principles of what is generally termed modern criticism—*La Critique Moderne*—assumed the importance of a manifesto. The time had arrived when the manifold labours which characterized so vividly the tendency of the age, and opened new channels in nearly all branches of knowledge, should find an exponent, eloquent and untrammelled, prominent and sufficiently bold, who, deaf to the clamours of the crowd, and rising above all prejudices, would assert the claims of modern science and its right to broach all opinions based upon scientific truths and principles. M. Renan became that fearless advocate, and the preface to the essays, was the open declaration of the new school.

Without challenging refutations or shrinking from controversies, the Preface to the *Études* gives the method followed by that array of progressive scholars who are determined to enjoy and permit others to enjoy, the greatest latitude in every thing which pertains to the pursuit of science under all its different aspects; and who, notwithstanding a bitter opposition, have succeeded in making themselves heard and even respected by their opponents. There is nothing polemical in their efforts; they do not strive to oppose any existing doctrine, but seem to be advancing speedily in the path of investigation without caring for the uproar which at times impedes their labours, without lessening their exertions. In less than a quarter of a century, they have remodelled the old sciences, created new ones, and brought to bear upon them all, a critical method

which thus far has proved too successful ever to be abandoned or despised.

In a task which embraces the most important problems, it is impossible to avoid questions relating to the origins of religions, "I was drawn towards them by an invincible attraction, for religion is certainly the highest of the manifestations of human nature, and that which among all poetry approaches nearer the essential aim of art, in elevating man above common life, and awakening the consciousness of his celestial origin," says M. Renan; and in this he is only the echo of all those who live for the sake of truth alone, and endeavour to reach the lofty regions from which it often sends forth the effulgence of divinity. Disclaiming all intentions of lessening our religious tendencies, he sincerely wishes to elevate and purify them, believing that the study of religions can only "soothe the soul and promote a blessed life." Religion being an integral part of human nature, is true in its essence, although impressed with the defects pertaining to the particular forms of worship of all times and countries. As to discussing purely theological questions, he does not think himself any more obliged to do it, than Burnouf, Creuzer, Guignaut and all critical historians, deemed themselves bound to undertake the apology or refutation of the different religions which formed the subject of their investigations. Withal, he submits with evident sorrow to the sad condition "of being thrust out of the great religious family, in which may be found some of the best-hearted people in the world, and of knowing that those with whom he would wish so much to live in moral communion deem him a perverse being." Such, however, has always been the case; and despite a vaunted progress in matters of religious tolerance, all rationalists, whatever may be their origin and sincerity, must resign themselves to being cursed and excommunicated by those who believe that beyond the pale of their own creed, there exist only errors and heresies.

Notwithstanding the subversive character of his doctrines and the dissatisfaction of the clergy, M. Renan was made a knight of the Legion of Honour; and in 1856, he saw his efforts crowned with the greatest reward which can be awarded to a scholar, in being elected a member of the Institute of France, in place of the lamented Augustin Thierry

The bent of his genius, now that he had relinquished all hopes of devoting himself to the Natural Sciences, and especially to that of Comparative Physiology, for which he always expressed a strong predilection, was evidently towards the history of the Eastern World, the languages of its several nations, and their place in the progressive march of the human race. He had already accomplished enough to become what might be called the representative of the Oriental races among the scholars of his country; but ambitious to do more, he again resumed his scientific researches, and published successively a new translation of the *Book of Job* (to which Ary Scheffer intended to add a series of illustrations, left incomplete, unfortunately, by his sudden death), a commentary on the age and characteristics of that great poem, and a version in French of the *Song of Songs*, brought back, according to Bunsen's idea, to its original form, which, as is now supposed, was an adaptation to the stage of that early period. In 1860, he was intrusted by the Emperor with a mission for archaeological explorations on the supposed sites of the Phenician cities.

If from that expedition the scientific world reaped an ample collection of epigraphic monuments of the highest importance, and valuable specimens of Phenician art, from the time of the Assyrian domination to that of the Seleucides, wrenched from the necropolis of Sour and Sidon, the explorer purchased dearly the honour of having first brought to light those vestiges of a by-gone civilization. Whilst in the Lebanon, M. Renan's beloved sister, who accompanied him in that arduous journey, from which she hoped to gather blissful reminiscences to last her through life, suddenly expired in his arms. Nothing, perhaps, can express in fitter terms the feelings of her bereaved brother, than the dedication which opens in so solemn a manner his *Life of Jesus*:

TO THE SPIRIT OF MY SISTER HENRIETTA, WHO DIED AT BYBLOS ON THE
24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1861.

"Doest thou remember, from thy resting place in the bosom of God, those long days at Ghazir, where alone with thee, I wrote these pages inspired by the scenes which we had just traversed? Silent close to me, thou readst every leaf, and copied it as soon as written, whilst the sea, the villages, the ravines, the mountains, spread them-

selves at our feet. When the overpowering light of day had yielded to the innumerable army of stars, thy ingenuous and delicate questions, thy discreet misgivings, brought me back to the sublime object of our common thoughts. One day thou saidst that thou wouldst love this book, first because it had been written with thee, and also because it pleased thee. If at times thou apprehendedst for it the narrow opinions of frivolous men, yet thou always believedst that truly religious spirits would in the end be pleased with it. When in the middle of grateful meditations, death struck us both with its wing, the sleep of fever seized us both at the same hour; I awoke alone! . . . Thou sleepest now in the land of Adonis, near the holy Byblos, and the sacred springs where the women of the ancient mysteries came to mingle their tears. Reveal to me, O my good genius, to me whom thou lovedst, those truths which rule over death, save us from fearing and make us almost love it."

M. Renan was yet in the East, when the Professors of the College of France, and the Members of the French Institute who enjoy the right of proposing the candidates for all the vacant chairs of that celebrated institution, justly impressed with the necessity of adding to their number a scholar of his attainments and reputation, proposed that he should accept the Professorship of the Hebrew, Chaldaic and Syriac Languages and Literature, vacant since 1857 by the death of the great orientalist, Etienne Quatremère. On his return, the Emperor appointed him; but before taking possession of his chair, M. Renan submitted to the competent authorities a detailed programme of the course which he intended to follow. He could not view this appointment simply in the light of a personal preference to a high office. Deeply regretting the discredit into which the Historical Sciences in matters of Biblical exegesis had fallen in France ever since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and anxious to elevate them again to the high standard they held before their introduction into Holland and Germany, he only accepted that coveted professorship, hoping to enjoy like all his predecessors free scope in his method of instruction. Notwithstanding its close connexion with the history of the origin and early monuments of the prevailing religion, the Chair of Hebrew was not and never could be transformed into a theological one. What theology would he have taught? There is scarcely an important passage in the Bible which is not interpreted in a different manner by every creed. Must he choose one or endeavour to conciliate all these opposing interpretations?

Clearly not. The dogmatism or religious import of the sacred writings does not come within his province. In the building adjoining, called *La Sorbonne*, theologians and orthodox students can obtain the biblical knowledge they seek, and in the manner best adapted to their mode of inquiry. In the College of France, the case is different. Ever since its foundation in the sixteenth century, at the time when the Reformation was working such momentous changes in the scientific notions and modes of thinking of the French people, it has always been considered as a lay and independent establishment, where profane and secular doctrines in all matters of knowledge might be substituted for what we may appropriately term oracular explanations. We have already seen how elevated and philosophical were M. Renan's notions in regard to philological studies; and now that he had before him such precedents, it is easy to infer that he was disposed less than ever to banish from the curriculum historic and critical investigations. If the result of such a course is to bring forth facts or opinions at variance with the belief or interpretations of churchmen, let churchmen maintain their ground if they can, and oppose the new-fangled doctrines in the manner best calculated to promote the interest of the Church. The field is open to them as to all exegetical scholars; the texts are the very ones offered by themselves in evidence, and as they do not hesitate to appeal to reason when faith fails to open the way to an unlimited credence in matters pertaining to religious history, they should not lay claim to universal sway in this respect. At all events, it is not the place of a professor in the College of France to transform his chair into an arena for polemical or apologetic teachings, nor is he debarred from the privilege of investigating the historical character of religions in general, whether they are professed by heathens or Christians. It does not follow that by virtue of his office he necessarily becomes an infallible interpreter, and that his views thereby acquire the force of a rescript. From the moment that he resorts solely to science and reason, he is amenable to the laws of science and reason, but without regard to the exigences of faith, whether religious or traditional.

Principles so open and spirited could not admit of compromise, nor was M. Renan disposed to make any conces-

sion. The last request of his dying sister had been to relinquish all hopes of ever advocating his opinions from a chair or tribune, rather than yield to the pretensions of a bigoted crowd. And when he was called at last to face the eager multitude which on the day of his inaugural thronged all the seats and avenues of the college, he boldly and eloquently set forth a programme which expressed in unmistakable language his convictions, hopes and everlasting aspirations. The Church party, always powerful in France, even when seemingly at variance with the government, viewed with anger and alarm the appointment of such an intrepid thinker to the oldest chair in the first institution in the land. Forming a cabal, they strove by clamorous interruptions to deafen the voice of the young professor, who, calm and undaunted, compelled at last his opponents to hear and listen. He had taken for the text of his inaugural address, a survey of the part played by the Semitic peoples in the History of Civilization. Could he unfold the annals of that great race, and omit the last period of its momentous influence over the religious doctrines of the world? Was not Christianity the offspring of Judaism? To use a metaphor employed in that memorable discourse, you might as well allow the professor of Botany to describe the root of the plant he wishes to depict but forbid him to analyse its flower and fruit. And when, the exigence of the subject requiring him to speak of the sublime founder of the Christian religion, he let fall from his lips a sentence which brought forth angry and deafening demonstrations on the part of the adherents of the clergy, the students who had congregated in force when informed that the Church party were endeavouring to drive the eloquent orator from his chair, invaded the hall, and responded with loud and earnest applause. This is the sentence:

x R. 161. "A man incomparable,—so great that although every thing here should be considered from a scientific point of view, I do not wish to contradict those who, struck with the exceptional character of his works, call him God."

In vain did the clergy endeavour to stifle a voice so fearless. Who knows but this solitary phrase is destined to become the turning point of a religious reformation among those who heard it?

The government deemed it necessary at that particular

juncture to conciliate the Clerical party; and on the next day, the official column of the *Moniteur* contained a decree suspending M. Renan's course indefinitely. The Administration could possibly afford to yield to the demands of an influential party which in this instance assumed the dictatorial character of a faction; but the vast majority of the educated class were not willing to submit quietly to restraints, justly deemed by them unwarrantable. They protested, visited, and serenaded nightly the persecuted professor, and for several days filled the spacious amphitheatre of the College, hoping that before such an outburst of disapprobation the order would be rescinded. It was in vain; M. Renan never appeared before them; but firm in the belief that his course met the approbation of all impartial thinkers, and bent on fulfilling a mission which his opponents by their rash conduct rendered imperative, he appealed to the press. In a manly address, he asked of his colleagues and hearers to weigh his reasons, and await with patience the time when he could once more expatiate in public upon the origins of a religious history, certainly misunderstood and perhaps perverted.

M. Renan had long cherished the hope that the results of his vast researches might be made to converge into a work of general import which the masses could easily grasp, and in the course of time evolve, irrespective of consequences. Whilst in Palestine, with no other help than a few books, and under the cheering influence of his sister, he commenced this great undertaking, which was yet unfinished when her untimely death hastened his return to France.

Free henceforth from all the restraints and occupations incident to a professorship, he resumed his labours with diligence; and just one year after the scene enacted in the College of France, and as a tacit reply to the attacks of the clergy, M. Renan published his *Life of Jesus*. The publication of this work is a grave event. It opens, at least among the French, a new era, and for the first time compels the vast majority of readers to face, discuss, and if possible, solve for themselves, questions of vital import which have hitherto been left to the precepts of orthodox exponents or the mutterings of traditional faith.

There are in the sphere of historical studies, phenomena which historians and philosophers often hesitate to investi-

gate, and names surrounded with such a halo, that they rarely fail to dazzle those who attempt to unravel their mysterious character. The advent of Christianity is one of these phenomena, and the name of its sublime founder the dazzling obstacle which bids defiance to the curiosity of all. True it is, that the world has never been wanting in deists, sceptics and free-thinkers, but their influence was transient, because passion, and not the love of truth alone, prompted their efforts. It is only during the present century that those who aim solely at dispelling the mist which still surrounds the origins of the greatest religious transformation known, and whose labours rest absolutely upon a scientific basis, have succeeded in obtaining a place among the influential and respected scholars of all nations. Yet, notwithstanding their efforts, a life of Jesus, which all could peruse, and in keeping with the actual state of scientific knowledge; that is, a history where the historical Christ was not formally and absolutely separated from the evangelical Jesus, such as the gratitude of the modern world has framed it within the hidden recesses of religious consciousness, had yet to be written. M. Renan has attempted it. Forty thousand copies sold in the space of six weeks, the bitter denunciations of the official clergy, and sincere applause from numberless thinkers and scholars every where, attest the merit of that work, which may yet prove to be the first of a long series of lofty endeavours destined to revive and modify the religious creed of a people who, in matters pertaining to religion, have been heretofore submissive, sceptical or indifferent.

M. Renan's book is more than a biography of Jesus, it is the introduction to a history of the origins of the religion which now rules the world. Will he ever complete it? His language betrays a state of doubt and hesitation; for it is a momentous task to not only restore the annals of the early times of Christianity, but to describe the strange revolutions undergone in the sphere of religious principles during the first two centuries of the Christian era. How imposing a subject, and how fraught with great teachings! After tracing the outline of the sublime drama which, commenced noiselessly in an obscure town of Galilee, ends its first act amidst such clamours and lamentations on the bleak Golgotha, the historian would describe the wondrous

efforts of the apostles and agony of the martyrs of the new religion under the pagan emperors, its eventful struggle and final triumph over the Roman Empire. Impelled by a necessity which no impartial historian can avoid, he could not limit himself to a mere recital of facts. Ideas would soon command his attention, and take the place of names, dates and chronology. And it is unquestionable that the most striking features of such a history must be the description complete, unbiased and fearless, of the extraordinary modifications and almost subversive changes, introduced by the disciples in the original idea and leading principles of their sublime master. Let us hope that M. Renan's History of the Origins of Christianity (intended to consist of four volumes, of which the *Life of Jesus* is the first) will develop these lofty considerations, which, above all, should be set forth, with the truthfulness and eloquence which constitute the chief merits of all his works.

As to the *Life* itself, it is necessarily based upon the books of the New Testament. The profane literature of the first centuries of our era, the apocryphæ and Talmuds united, contain almost nothing that can prove of any avail to the historian. Yet, it does not follow that the canonical gospels must be accepted wholly as the Church hands them to us, and followed with servile adherence to the literal meaning of every word. Experience has shown that while exegetes must study the Scriptures with feelings of reverence, they may also search them freely, and hope to succeed in separating the grain from the chaff. It is thus, that in Montauban, as well as at Tübingen, they have come to consider the books of the New Testament as legendary and impersonal compositions. Luke's only betrays an unmistakable identity. M. Renan's opinion is that we have neither of the original gospels which bear the names of Matthew and Mark; while the books ascribed to them are only subsequent arrangements which were completed one by the other. Yet, he believes himself capable of restoring what belonged to each originally, with sufficient certainty to fix the exact weight of these compositions in the scale of historical worth. Thus, Matthew can be trusted for the discourses, whilst Mark possesses greater precision, less credulity, and is therefore freer from fables. As to Luke's book, it is wholly derived from Matthew's and Mark's.

And strange as it may seem, the Gospel to which M. Renan ascribes the first place, so far as biographical and historical assertions are concerned, is the most contested of all; namely, that which bears the name of John. Despite the remarkable discrepancies which all impartial exegetes cannot fail to detect when comparing that gospel with the other three discourses ascribed to Jesus, and which are so much at variance with the *Logia* that M. Renan feels compelled to acknowledge that, "if Jesus spoke as Matthew relates, he cannot have spoken as John asserts;" notwithstanding metaphysical notions not only wholly novel but contrary certainly to the spirit of Christ, he does not hesitate to accept it as the basis of his history. To show his preference, M. Renan takes the example of Socrates, and asks whether it is Xenophon or Plato who sets forth the Socratic teachings with greater truth? It is not doubtful, says he, that it is Xenophon. Yet, in writing a life of Socrates, he would not therefore reject the details found in Plato, inasmuch as John (who in this comparison represents the great Academician) is a better and more complete biographer than Matthew.

M. Renan then accepts as authentic the four canonical gospels, but after having first shown the degrees through which they have been made to pass. That is, the original documents which are now lost; then a state of admixture, where the original documents were amalgamated without any endeavour to polish or accord,—which is the actual condition of Matthew's and Mark's;—followed by a state of combination, concordance and wrought redaction, as exhibited in the gospel of Luke. As to John's, it is apologetic and sectarian.

If the Gospels could be so modified, the word authenticity would not convey to us its usual meaning. It may be that a book can be authentic in all its parts, taken separately, and spurious as a whole; and we imagine that it is in this sense that the New Testament is accepted by modern exegetical scholars. If so, we may more readily understand how they can combine, blend, embody and re-embody them according to their own conception of Scriptural History. They may even add elements gathered from different, though homogeneous sources, such, for instance, as the fragments from old gospels found in Papias and the early Fathers. Yet, notwithstanding a latitude which many critics, however tolerant and liberal, would deem excessive, the author

might compose a life of Jesus perfectly orthodox, superior perhaps to those which we owe to Riccius, Genoude, or our own Jeremy Taylor, so far as style and method are concerned, but which would hardly correspond to the actual state of the science of evangelical exegesis. To write such a history the historian should advance one step; but so great is the effort that it has caused many to hesitate and recede at the last moment:—He must deny the possibility of miracles. M. Renan did not pause to consider whether a denial so bold would estrange him at once from his associates and excite the anger of his opponents. As early as the year 1849, in a periodical called *La Liberté de penser*, he maintained that we must not accept marvellous recitals literally, whatever may be their origin or antiquity, inasmuch as the essence of Criticism is the negation of supernatural agencies. And that there should be no misunderstanding in the meaning of the word *supernatural*, he gave a definition which is remarkably exact. "What I mean here by that word," said he, "is the *miracle*; that is, a particular act on the part of the Deity, inserting itself in the series of physical and psychological events in the world; thus disturbing the natural course of facts, in view of a particular government of mankind."

All facts, then, must be considered as the results of laws immutable, universal, and susceptible of a rational explanation. Many may still appear to us extraordinary, incomprehensible or wonderful, but they are nevertheless entitled to a place in the domain of analysis and science. That science cannot yet explain many of them, is only a dire necessity to which we must submit, but without relinquishing the hope of solving the mystery which still surrounds them and conceals their exact character. We believe that there is a time fixed in the progressive march of the human intellect for the study of certain facts and the admissibility by all of the solutions found by a few. But it is absolutely necessary that the facts alleged should be *facts*, and above all, *verified*; and it is when submitted to such an ordeal, that many allegations and assertions, unable to bear the test, lose much of their worth and importance.

In answer to certain questions asked M. Renan through the columns of the *Opinion Nationale*, he wrote to his friend M. Gueroult, a letter which showed that time and experi-

ence, so far from modifying his opinions on these important questions, had imparted to them a form and intensity which could but become manifest in all his subsequent works. It is no longer the doctrine of miracles, as set forth in the preface to the *Etudes*, which claims his attention, but the momentous problem of the relation of God to Nature, as illustrated by "the order, so constant, divine, perfectly wise, just and good, which reigns in the laws of the Universe." We reprint the leading passages of that letter from the *Philobiblion*:

"You admit that science cannot prove the existence of a Free Being superior to man, interfering in Nature for the purpose of changing its course. But, you add, can science prove that such a Being does not exist? I do not inquire whether it can, in a metaphysical and *à priori* way. But the experimental proof is sufficient. Such a Being has never revealed himself in a scientifically-proved manner. When he shall reveal himself, we will believe in him. It is not for us to demonstrate the impossibility of a miracle; it is for the miracle to demonstrate itself. What proof have we that sirens and centaurs do not exist, except that they have never been seen? What has banished from the civilized world a faith in the old demonology, except the observation that all the deeds formerly attributed to demons are well enough explained without their agency? A being who does not reveal himself by any act, is, for science, a being without existence.

"I know that people are often led to distinguish the simple intervention of a superior will, in the ordinary course of things, in view of a certain end, from what is, properly speaking, a miracle. It is, however, a distinction which fades away before a rigorous analysis. In fact, what means such intervention? It means that the things of this world may take, in consequence of a supernatural force, acting in a given moment, a different course from what they would have otherwise taken. A miracle is nothing else. The flagrant violation of the accustomed order, which constitutes a miracle in the eyes of men, implies only a greater degree of difficulty; but the words *easy* and *difficult* have no meaning when we are speaking of an all-powerful being. For God, it is no more of a miracle to resuscitate the dead, to make a river flow back to its source, than to change the direction of the wind during some day of battle, to stay a sickness which might prove mortal, to sustain an empire which might fall, or to violate the liberty of human resolve. In the one case, the violence done to natural laws is most evident; in the other it is hidden. For God there is no difference. Bashful miracles (*miracles honteux*), seeking to conceal themselves, are none the less miracles. Providence, then, understanding the word in its vulgar acceptation—is a synonym for thaumaturgy. The whole question is, to know whether God emits particular acts. For myself, I believe that the true Providence is not distinct from the order, so constant, divine, perfectly wise, just, and good, which reigns in the laws of the universe.

"You seem to believe, my dear sir, that such a doctrine is synony-

mous with atheism. Here I strongly protest. Such a doctrine is the exclusion of a capricious God, thaumaturgic, acting by fits and starts; allowing the clouds generally to follow their course, but making them deviate when he is prayed to do so; leaving such a lung or intestine to decompose up to a certain point, but staying the decomposition when a vow is made to him; changing his mind, in a word, according to his views of interest. Such a God, I am free to say, is unscientific. We do not believe in him; and should the saddest consequences result from this fact, the absolute sincerity of which we make profession obliges us to say so.

"But, in removing so gross an idea of the Divinity, we believe that we combat superstition, and not real religion. Malebranche has admirably demonstrated this before us, in his *Méditations Chrétiennes*: 'God does not act by individual wishes' (*Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières*). This profound orator, bolder than we are, established this thesis *à priori*, from the consideration of the Divine perfections. We establish the same thesis by the absence of facts proving the contrary, and we translate it thus: 'There has never been shown, in Nature or in history, any fact caused manifestly by an individual will superior to that of man.' When this observation shall be overthrown by a single proved fact, we shall hasten to modify the theory which we believe ourselves justified in deducing from it.

"As to the true God of the human conscience, he is unassailable. He has his right to be, in an invincible faith, and not in a more or less ingenious process of reasoning. Nature is immoral; the Sun has looked down upon the most crying sins without veiling himself; he has smiled upon the worst of crimes. But in the conscience rises a sacred voice, which speaks to man of quite another world—the world of the ideal, the world of truth, of goodness, of justice. If there existed nothing but nature, we might ask ourselves if God is necessary. But since first there existed an honest man, God has been proved. It is in the world of the ideal, and there only, that the various faiths of natural religion have their legitimate origin. But, I cannot repeat it too often, it is the ideal which really is, and the fleeting reality which only seems to be. The just soul which sees through the crystal of this world the pure idea, disengaged from time and space, is the most clear-seeing. He who shall consecrate his life to the good, the true, and the beautiful, will be the best-advised. This is the living God who is felt, but does not prove himself. I need no miracles to believe in him; I need only in silence hearken to the imperative revelation of my own heart.

"Thus the men who have had a really fruitful sentiment of God, have never put these questions in a contradictory way. They have been neither Deists, after the manner of the French school, nor Pantheists. They have never lost themselves in those subtle questions where their genius would have vainly consumed itself. They have powerfully felt God; they have lived in him; they have not defined him. Jesus occupies an exceptional rank in this Divine phalanx. In recognising himself as the Son of God, in authorizing men to call God their Father, in overthrowing the superstitions of the

ancient worships by his beautiful theory of prayer (Matt., chap. vi.), of spiritual adoration (John, chap. iv.), in giving the example of a life entirely consecrated to the works of his Father, he has realized the highest consciousness of God which has probably ever existed in humanity. For this reason, the truly religious men, of all ages, would be his disciples, even though they should disagree with almost all the points of faith which the Churches issuing from him have developed under his name.

“ ‘Besides Nature and Man, is there, then, nothing?’ you ask.

“ There is every thing, I would answer. Nature is only an appearance; man is only a phenomenon. There is the eternal foundation, there is the infinite, the substance, the absolute, the ideal; there is, according to the fine Mussulman saying, *that which endures*; there is, according to the finer Jewish saying, *that which is*. This is the Father from whose bosom all things issue, and to whose bosom all things return. Let us take away from the Divine life every notion belonging to our fleeting existence. Is this Absolute Being free? Is he conscious? Does the conscious particle which returns to him preserve its consciousness? *Yes* and *no* are equally inapplicable to these sorts of questions. They imply an absolutely incurable delusion, the tendency to transport the conditions of our finite existence into the infinite existence.

“ We do not conceive of existence except under the form of a limited *ego*. In order to represent to himself an existing God, it was inevitable that man should make him in his own image; that is to say, make him also a limited *ego*. But who does not see that such a conception is self-contradictory? the infinite being presented as a finite—the pure spirit endowed with the attributes which presuppose organs! In order to be consistent, they should push anthropomorphism to its last results. For—let us not deceive ourselves in this matter—all the faculties which the vulgar Deism attributes to God have never existed without a brain. There has never been memory, foresight, perception of exterior objects, consciousness, finally, without a nervous system. The human vocabulary applied to Divinity shocks us at every instant. Why attempt to express the Infinite by words and phrases which are essentially limited? Why wish to reason concerning that which we recognise as ineffable? With an immense variety of formulæ, and to enormously different degrees of simplicity or refinement, humanity will adore to all eternity that *single substance with many names* (*Æschylus, Prometheus*, v. 218), that common Father of all those who seek the good and the true. Every one creates his own theology according to his needs, and all violent attempts to change quickly the received ideas upon this matter are full of danger. But we do no violence to the opinion of any one, in expressing what we believe. The listener or the reader remains free before the doctrine which is exposed to him. He will agree to it, if it suits his degree of culture; he will not agree to it, if it is either premature or too backward for him.

“ Besides, who is deceived here, and what a comedy is human life, if it is composed of some millions of thinking beings occupied in simulating with each other faiths which they do not hold! It is not by

hypocritical reticence that a faith which has run its course, can be made to live a day longer. Every opinion, freely conceived, is good and moral for him who has conceived it. From all sides we come to sum up the exterior legislation on religion in a single word—Liberty."

Resting on principles so broad and liberal, and availing himself of the labours of the more recent exegetical writers in France and Holland, M. Renan with great eloquence and sincerity unfolds the life of Jesus. Theologians may object to the interpretations or refuse to hearken to the teachings which this remarkable book contains, but no impartial judge will deny it a place among the works destined to command a lasting and wholesome influence every where. Yet, when examined closely, many pages betray feelings of regret and deep emotions, which when considered from a practical point of view, may well seem a want of decision on the part of the historian. These involuntary misgivings admit, however, of justification when we recollect that respect for the religious creed of his aged mother, who still watches by his side, and the remembrance of years of belief which at one time may have filled the heart without satisfying the mind, continue to war against the dictates of a more enlightened conscience and the instigation of a science which appeals solely to reason. An inward struggle of such a character could not but manifest itself through a certain irresolution, which might not escape the notice of those eager to consider the slightest hesitation as a blemish altogether irremissible. Taking for instance the chapter where M. Renan endeavours to explain the resurrection of Lazarus, those rigid critics needed only appeal to the faith of orthodox Christians or the profound admiration which we all feel for the sublime character of Jesus, to dispel the sad impression left upon the mind after we have tried to solve the dilemma which springs from the author's bold suppositions. The difficulty is so much the greater with M. Renan, that after having denied the existence of miracles, and even the possibility of them, if we take his early declarations, he now contents himself with the assertion that no miracles as yet have been *proved*. On the other hand, he takes as a basis for his history, the Gospel of John, which he decides to be the most complete and, by inference, the most reliable of the four, so far as biogra-

phical details or material facts are concerned. Now, in that gospel, there is a lucid, detailed and perfectly intelligible account of a man who is alleged to have risen from the dead; and the relation is couched in such unmistakable terms that M. Renan feels compelled to admit "that in Bethany something happened which was considered a miracle." Having accepted the outward character of the fact, he endeavours to explain it from a rational point of view, and resorts to several hypotheses to make it tally with his conception of past events. To take only one of his suppositions. Granted that Lazarus was not dead, and that the followers of Christ were guilty of a fraud in endeavouring to give Lazarus, whom they knew to be living, the appearance of a man dead and buried, it is evident that Jesus cannot have acted the part ascribed to him without sharing in the guilt of that fraud:—

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. . . . Let us go unto him. . . Thy brother, said Jesus to Martha, shall rise again. . . . Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. . . He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes.

Now, if we once admit that the act on the part of Jesus was so performed, and that such were the words which fell from his lips; and on the other hand, if we deny that Lazarus actually rose from the dead, it is unquestionable that Jesus, knowingly and premeditatedly, performed an act which then as well as at present, would be deemed insidious and fraudulent. Call its motives pious, endeavour to excuse or explain it away by taking into consideration the times, place and necessities to which all prophets and reformers were then subjected, the act itself is nevertheless blamable, and so totally at variance with the lofty character of Jesus, such even as it appears from every page and from every line in M. Renan's book, that the supposition must be rejected. Unable to believe in a miracle, or unwilling to consider John's recital as tantamount to a proof, and it being utterly impossible to accuse Jesus of having committed a fraud, there seems to be no alternative left than to deny the resurrection of Lazarus altogether, regardless of texts and consequences.

Contrary to all expectations, the *Life of Jesus* elicited praise and commendations, not only on the part of scholars and professional critics, but from the reading public in France, Holland, Germany, and, to a certain extent, in England. At Rome, the Pope deemed himself obliged to commit to the flames several copies of the work in the gardens of the Quirinal. The leading French reviews and journals devoted to it series of criticisms prepared by their ablest writers; even one of the professors in the College of France did not hesitate to write for the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* an elaborate article, in which praises were bestowed with no sparing hand. This apology, however, has since been anathematized by a learned Bishop, who set the example for numberless pamphleteers whose *brochures* now overwhelm all the bookstalls in Paris. It must be confessed, however, that most of those contributions are little calculated to promote the science of evangelical exegesis. They deal in generalities, and dwell on the philosophical bearing of the work, rather than on its historical importance. True it is, that theologians alone are expected to possess the critical knowledge which is required to do justice to works of such character and importance. In England, where they are much better versed in the Scriptures, several of the critics have undertaken to follow M. Renan through all his interpretations, while some theological writers following him step by step, from Papias to the Council of Nice, endeavoured to show what seemed to them incorrect deductions. Yet, with the exception of the orthodox critics, none come to a positive conclusion. M. Renan justly complains of this want of decision on the part of his reviewers; for he is the first to solicit at all hands and at all hazards, the criticisms which alone may enable him to meet his antagonists on a neutral ground, where accepted texts might be interpreted by means derived exclusively from science. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the *Life of Jesus* broke forth upon the thinking world like a storm through a clear sky. Few were prepared to meet it scientifically; and although many received it with admiration, it may be that its success thus far is due chiefly to a secret longing on the part of those who hope to encircle within the limits of reason, the sublime object of a love and gratitude which will endure, *volens volens*, to the end of time!

Considered from a literary point of view, the *Life of Jesus* is a work of rare perfection. On that point the opinion of all critics is unanimous. It would be difficult to find among the French writers of the present day, one whose style possesses more charm or greater purity than are exhibited in all of M. Renan's writings. To the force, elegance, and extreme clearness which constitute the merits of the great authors, he adds analytical faculties, which betray the true philosopher, and descriptive powers worthy of a poet deeply enamoured of truth and nature. The tranquil and benevolent spirit by which he is evidently actuated, manifests itself in the kindly nature of his style. And if at times the vehemence of an ardent conviction prompts pages which sap the foundations of a creed long trusted and cherished, let us not forget that his only aim is to elevate our religious nature, and to dispel for ever the mist of superstition :—*Religentem esse oportet, religiosum nefas !**

H. H.

* AUL. GELL.

STUDIES
OF
RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND CRITICISM.

PREFACE.

THE custom of collecting in volumes essays already published in periodicals, a custom which many regard as indicating a deplorable tendency in the literature of the day, is due wholly to the importance attained of late years, by reviews and by the literary department of some of the daily journals. It would be useless to reprint simple notices designed merely to announce a work and containing no original discussion. But when critical articles have, rightly or wrongly, ceased to be extracts and analyses, and have become solid works, one cannot take it amiss that the author chooses to give a more lasting publicity to fragments which often have cost him more research and reflexion than an original book. Perhaps, this new kind of literature will some day be regarded as belonging especially to our epoch, and consequently as that in which our epoch has excelled. Whether that would be a eulogy on the times we live in, or a criticism on them, I do not inquire. The admission, that at the present moment this is one of the most important forms of intellectual production, is enough to relieve authors who collect pieces that have small merit possibly, but on which they have bestowed their utmost care—from the charge of putting forward unreasonable claims, or of exaggerating the importance of their works.

It is very true that volumes thus made up, if regarded as books, sin gravely against the rules of regular composition and the laws of unity. Even when one has endeavored, as I have, in the present volume, to bring together only pieces that are kindred by their subject, and that form a whole; it is impossible that fragments artificially combined should not include many points that had a reason for appearing in a periodical, but have not so much reason for standing in a book. Especially would this be the case, if among the pieces reproduced some are of a date already remote. Without having anything to disavow, one, as he reads over fragments written eight years ago—those years filled too with somewhat active thought—may well find some details which he would now present in a different way. In the reproduction of essays like these, two rules, as it seems to me, must be observed. On one side, it would be a grievous thing for an author to feel obliged to change the original character of his work, and to give it exactly the form he would choose, if he were composing it for the first time. On the other side, the respect due to the public forbids the bringing to the light works which one is able to improve. I have tried to meet both these obligations, and I think I can say that the present volume, while it contains fragments written at a remote period, remote, certainly, considering the events which have crowded on since their publication, still includes nothing that does not answer to my actual thought. These remarks apply particularly to the *Essay on the Critical Historians of Jesus*, and to a few other pages, composed in a style different from that I have since adopted. I cannot say that I should, to-day, write these pages just as they are; but I put my name to them without scruple, because they offer nothing but what seems to me conformable with the truth.

The excellent custom of *retractationes** which antiquity so freely practised, does not belong to our literary code: that criticism of one's-self, which, if sincere, might bear such fruits both for the author and for the public, would, in our days, be regarded as a refinement of vanity; and the writer who should allow himself to indulge it, would undoubtedly pay for his candour by the harm he would do his reputation. Theological dogmatism has led us all to an idea of truth so narrow that the man who does not stand forward in the attitude of an infallible teacher, runs the risk of losing the confidence of his readers. The scientific spirit, proceeding by delicate approaches, inclosing the truth little by little, modifying its formulae incessantly, in order to bring them to a more and more exact expression, changing its points of view, so as to neglect nothing in the infinite complexity of problems presented by the universe, is commonly little understood, and passes for an avowal of incapacity or of caprice. At the risk of exposing myself to these reproaches, but perfectly resolved never to sacrifice a particle of what I believe true, to a conceited pretension to infallibility, I shall make here two observations which concern, one my religious, the other my scientific character.

The article on Channing, at the time of its publication, raised, on the part of his admirers, objections the justice of which I in some respects acknowledge. In addressing these to me they seemed to overlook the terms of sympathy which I used in speaking of the American reformer. I confess, however, that the misunderstanding was, to a certain extent, well grounded, owing to the disproportion

* This word has not in Latin the sense that we attach to the word *retractation*: it indicates mostly the labour of an author in taking up his old works and noting the changes which the progress of his thought suggested to him.

of praise and of censure in the article. Satisfied with having once for all expressed my admiration of the good work done by Channing, and presenting on the reverse side at great length the objections which his system is as open to as another, I may have left the impression that I did not place in the rank it deserves, the best religious movement that our generation has seen. When I wrote that article I was preoccupied chiefly with the absence of that fine culture and exalted genius at the price of which progress in the material order and even in some phases of the moral order is too often purchased; the honest and reasonable philosophy of the American school seemed to me cheap and mean as compared with the amplitude of Catholicism, and with the noble critical, philosophical and poetical style of Germany. I have not been able, on review, to modify my first opinion; but I willingly add that it casts no reproach on Channing. Good things must be taken frankly: each order of greatness has its own eminence, and should not be contrasted with another. A philanthropist who, called to pass judgment on Goethe, should set him on a line with Vincent de Paul, would find himself viewing the greatest genius of modern times as a mere egotist who did nothing for the happiness or the moral improvement of his contemporaries.

The article on the "Religions of Antiquity" seemed to me equally susceptible of additions, after I became acquainted with the labours of Germany on the comparative mythology of the Indo-European race—labours which did not exist, or which had not reached France at the date of my writing the article. These labours, the bearing of which is not yet, I think, fully understood even by their authors, when adjusted to parallel views on the Semitic religions, in the exposition of which I may have had some share, must present the religions of antiquity under aspects rather different from those to which the efforts of the sym-

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bolical and of the purely Hellenic schools conduct. The unity of the Indo-European race as opposed to the Semitic, a unity recognised in religions as in languages, will serve henceforth as basis for the history of the religions of antiquity. This does not affect the doctrine of the article in question, but it explains the silence I have kept in regard to those recent discoveries which will make an era in science. If I have made no attempt at filling up this gap, it is because the discoveries I refer to have not reached the point at which it is proper to present them to the public as definite results.

The pieces composing the present volume all relate to the history of religions, and will be found to embrace impartially the principal forms assumed by the religious sentiment, in antiquity, in the middle age, and in modern times. These topics have for me a charm which I do not conceal and which I cannot resist. Of all the manifestations of human nature, religion is certainly the loftiest and the most fascinating. Among all kinds of poetry, this best reaches the ultimate end of art which is to lift man above the vulgar life and to awaken in him the sentiment of his heavenly origin. Nowhere do the lofty instincts of the heart show themselves with more clearness; and even if one adopts the special doctrine of none of the great religious systems that have shared, or which still share the world among them, there results from them all one great fact which, to my view, constitutes the most consoling pledge of a mysterious future when the race and the individual will reap the fruit of their labours and sacrifices.

A grave difficulty attaches, I know, to these studies, and timid people are led to ascribe to the writers who take them up, tendencies and aims to which they are strangers. It is in the nature of religions to exact an absolute credence, consequently to set themselves above common rights, and to deny the impartial historian's competency to judge them.

In fact, religions, in order to support their claim to be exempt from all reproach, are obliged to have a special philosophy of history, founded on a belief in the miraculous intervention of Deity in human affairs—an intervention whose benefits accrue to them alone. Religions, moreover, are not free to dispose of their past; it must bend to the necessities of the present, and furnish a base for institutions that have plainly been introduced in the course of time. Criticism, on the contrary, whose rule is to follow the straight and loyal way of induction without the smallest side-thought of policy; criticism, whose first principle is, that miracle has no more place in the tissue of human affairs, than it has in the series of natural facts; criticism, which begins by proclaiming that every event in history has its human explanation, even though the explanation escape us through lack of sufficient knowledge, evidently cannot fall in with the theological schools which employ a method opposed to its own, and pursue a different end. Sensitive, like all powers that claim for themselves a divine source, religions naturally construe as hostility, even the most respectful expression of difference, and see enemies in all who exercise on them the simplest rights of reason.

Must this unfortunate misunderstanding, which will last for ever between the critical spirit and doctrines that are thus absolute in their claims, stop the human mind in its career of free research? We think not. At the outset human nature never consents to self-mutilation. One might, perhaps, conceive it possible that reason should consent to its own sacrifice in case it found itself opposed to a solitary doctrine, which all humanity adopted; but seeing that a crowd of systems claim each for itself the absolute truth, that all cannot possess it at once, that no one of them presents a title that can reduce to naught the pretensions of the rest—the abdication of criticism would in no wise help to give to the world that most desirable blessing of peace and

unanimity. Were the strife between religion and criticism to cease, the religions would strive for supremacy among themselves; were all the religions to be reduced to one, the different fractions of this one would curse each other; and even supposing that all the sects were to come to the recognition of a sort of catholicity, internal disputes, twenty times more animated and angry than those which separate rival religions and churches, would serve to feed the eternal craving of individual thought, to create the divine world after a fashion of its own. What must we conclude from all this? That in suppressing criticism, we should not suspend trial, and should perhaps depose the only judge who can clear up obscurities; that the right of every religion to assert as absolute its own truth, a right to be entirely respected, and which no person thinks of disputing, excludes neither the parallel right of other religions, nor the right of criticism, which holds itself aloof from them all. It is the duty of civil society to maintain these opposing claims in full front with each other, not trying to reconcile them, which would be an impossibility, and not allowing them to absorb one another, which could not be otherwise than injurious to the general interests of civilization.

It is important to remark, in short, that criticism, in exercising on history the right which belongs to it, commits no outrage of which any can complain; I say this not merely in view of its equal rights (that is too clear, since religious controversialists indulge every day in the most violent attacks on independent science), but even making the largest possible concessions to the fitness and to the majesty of the established worship. Religion, while it touches the pure heaven of the ideal with its summit, plants its base on the moving soil of human affairs, and shares in their instability and defects. Every work, whose material is furnished by man, being but a compromise between the

opposing necessities which constitute the passing life, is necessarily open to criticism ; and he says nothing against an institution who limits himself to the inoffensive remark that it has not wholly escaped from the fragile nature of all terrestrial structures. A religion must be of one style and not of another. Now, this essential condition of all existence implies a limit, an exclusiveness, a defect. Does art, which, like religion, aspires to represent the infinite under finite forms, renounce its mission because it knows that no image can represent the ideal? Would it not vanish into the vague and intangible the moment it aspired to be infinite in its forms, as it is in its conceptions? So religion exists only on condition of being very definite, very clear, very limited, and in consequence very open to criticism. The rigid, partial, and special side of each religion which constitutes its weakness, constitutes also its force ; for men are drawn together by their narrow thoughts, far more than by their broad ones. It is a small thing to have shown that every religious form is out of all proportion to its divine object, if one does not make haste to add that it could not be otherwise, and that every symbol must seem meagre and coarse when compared with the extreme delicacy of the truths it represents. The glory of religions is precisely here, that they propose an aim that is above human strength, that they boldly pursue the realization of it, and nobly fail in the attempt to give a fixed shape to the infinite aspirations of the human heart.

Eternal and sacred in their spirit, religions cannot, for this very reason, be equally so in their forms, and history would be mutilated in its fairest part, were it obliged to make account of the dogmatic exigences which forbid sects to display their weak sides. What do I say? It would be suppressed, for the exigences of different sects being contradictory, it would follow that in order to wound none, there must be a settled silence in regard to the chief element in

the development of man. In the political order, each government asserts its right absolutely, yet no government on that ground lays an interdict on history; at all events, States that have carried their superstitious regard for themselves to this point, have found that they brought on their own fit punishment, in moral decadence. Spain presents a striking example of the intellectual ruin to which an exaggerated self-esteem in political as well as in religious affairs fatally conducts. On the other hand, the breadth of ideas, and the intelligence which distinguish the catholics of Germany are due more to the perpetual friction of protestant criticism, than to the superiority of the Germanic race, in all that concerns the liberal culture of the mind.

I protest then, once for all, against the false interpretation they give my labours who regard as polemical works the different essays on the history of religion which I have published, or which I may publish hereafter. As polemical works, these essays, I shall be the first to admit, would be very clumsy indeed. Polemics demand a strategy with which I am unfamiliar. One must know how to fasten on the weak side of his adversaries, hold to it, never to start doubtful questions, to beware of all concessions, that is to say, to renounce that which constitutes the very essence of the scientific spirit. Such is not my method. The fundamental question on which religious discussion turns, that is to say, the question of fact in regard to revelation and the supernatural, I never touch: Not that I have not answered it to my entire satisfaction, but because the discussion of such a question is not scientific, or rather, because independent science supposes it already answered. Surely, if we are pursuing any polemical or proselyting aim, this would be a capital fault; it would be carrying into the sphere of delicate and dark problems a question which allows of much clearer treatment in the coarse terms ordinarily

employed by the controversialists and apologists. Far from regretting the advantage I thus abandon, I shall rejoice if I can thus convince theologians that my writings are of a different order from theirs, that one need seek in them only pure Erudition assailable as such which attempts sometimes to apply to the Jewish and Christian religion the critical principles that are followed in other branches of history and philology. As to the discussion of questions strictly theological, I would no more enter on them, than MM. Burnouf, Creuzer, Guigniaut, and many other critical historians of the ancient religions, would undertake from a sense of duty to refute or to defend the worships they espoused. For me, the history of humanity is a vast whole, where all is essentially unequal and diverse, but where all belongs to the same order, issues from the same causes, obeys the same laws. These laws I investigate with no other intention than to discover the exact shades of things as they are. Nothing will induce me to exchange a rôle humble but serviceable to science, for that of a controversialist, a rôle easily taken because it secures for the writer an assured favour with persons who think it a duty to meet war with war. For this kind of polemic, the need of which I am far from disputing, but which is suited neither to my tastes nor to my talents, Voltaire suffices. One cannot be at the same time a good controversialist and a good historian. Voltaire, so weak as a man of learning, Voltaire who seems so bare of sentiment for antiquity, to us who are instructed in a better method, Voltaire is twenty times victorious over adversaries who are still more destitute of criticism than he is himself. The new edition that is preparing of this great man's works will satisfy the need which just now seems to be felt, of an answer to theological assaults; answer bad in itself, but suited to the case it meets; old-school answer to old-school science. Let us do better, all

of us who are possessed by a love of the truth and a noble thirst for knowledge. Let us leave such debates to those who enjoy them; let us toil for the small number who march in the front rank of the human mind. Popularity, I am aware, fondly clings to the writers who, instead of producing the loftiest form of truth, set themselves to combat the opinions of their time; but by a just return they have no value the moment the opinion they have combated has ceased to be. They who refuted magic and judicial astrology in the 16th and 17th centuries rendered an immense service to reason; yet, their writings are unknown to-day; their very victory has made them forgotten. But the names of Scaliger, of Bochart, of Bayle, of Richard Simon, notwithstanding their works are in many points of detail surpassed, will for ever remain inscribed among those of the great promoters of human knowledge.

The sad but inevitable quarrel over the history of a religion between the sectaries of the religion and the friends of impartial science, should not then bring on science the accusation of anti-religious propagandism. If for a moment, under the force of a passing impulse, the devotee of critical research experiences something of St. Paul's desire: "Would that all men were such as I am!" the sentiment vanishes before a fairer estimate of the limits and the reach of the human mind. In the matter of religion every one adapts his shelter to his stature and his deeds. To venture to lift a hand against this pet work of the individual's powers, is rash and dangerous; for no one has a right to penetrate deeply enough into another's conscience, to distinguish there the accessory from the principal. In seeking to eradicate beliefs which one thinks superfluous, there is risk of touching the vital organs of the moral and religious life. All propagandism is out of place in the concerns of high scientific or philosophic culture, and the most admirable intellectual discipline im-

posed on people who are not ready for it, has none but bad effects. It is the duty of the scholar, therefore, to announce frankly the result of his studies, without trying to disturb the conscience of persons who are not called to the same life that he leads, but also without respecting the motives of interest or the pretended proprieties which so often falsify the utterance of the truth.

There is, again, one side on which the sternest critic, if he have any philosophy, can sympathize with those who are not privileged to be as tolerant as he. He knows that with high believers dissent almost always takes the tone of anathema; if he dislike anathema, the motive that dictates it gains his respect, and thus he comes to comprehend and almost to love the anger he inspires. In fact, this anger, although it supposes a certain littleness of mind, proceeds from an excellent source, the vitality of the religious sentiment. The harshest penalty which the man who has reached a life of reflection suffers in expiation of his exceptional position, is doubtless that of seeing himself thus cut off from the great family of religions to which the best souls in the world belong, and of thinking that the people with whom he would best love to dwell in moral communion, must perforce regard him as perverse. One must needs be very confident not to be troubled when women and children clasp their hands and exclaim: "Think as we do!" He comforts himself by believing that this chasm between the simple and the cultivated opens by a fatal law of our transition state; and that there is an upper realm of lofty souls, where those who curse each other often meet without suspecting it; an ideal city beheld by the Seer of the Apocalypse, into which press a countless multitude of every tribe, of every nation, of every tongue proclaiming with one voice the creed in which all join, "Holy, holy, holy is He who is, who was, and who shall be."

The word religion being that, which in the view of the majority has thus far summed up the life of the soul, a coarse materialism only can assail in its essence, this need, happily eternal, of our nature. Nothing is more faulty than the speech that confounds with irreligion the refusal to adhere to this or that credence which gives itself out as revelation. The man who takes life seriously, and employs his activity in the pursuit of a generous end, he is the religious man; the frivolous, the superficial, with no lofty morality, he is the impious. Those who worship anything are brothers, or at least are less hostile than those who obey nothing but interest, and who pretend that their sensual pleasures may really take precedence of the divine instincts of the human heart. The religious passions can make no false calculation than when they seek to ally themselves with levity or indifference, in opposing dissenters who conscientiously and according to the special cravings of their minds look for the truth.

For the immense majority of mankind an established religion is in every respect calculated for the practical culture of the ideal. To suppress or to weaken in the class deprived of other means of education this grand and unique remembrancer of nobleness is to debase human nature, and to take away from it the mark which distinguishes it essentially from the animal. The popular consciousness in its sublime and lofty impulse, attaching itself to the spirit alone, and seeing nothing of the scoriæ mixed with the pure gold, sanctifies the most imperfect symbol. In the faith of the people the religion is always true; for the people being no theologians, and entering scarcely at all into details of dogma, take only what is true—I mean the breath and the higher inspiration. In this sense, the philosopher is much nearer to an understanding with the simple-hearted man than with the man half cultivated, who carries a kind of awkward reflexion into matters of religion. How charming to see

in cabins and in common dwellings, where sordid use crushes everything, these ideal figures, these images which represent nothing actual! How sweet for a man, bent under his week's toil, to come the seventh day to contemplate, resting on his knees, the tall columns, the vaulted ceiling, the arches, the altar, to drink in the chants, to hear a wise and consoling word! The food which science, art, the high exercise of all the faculties, furnish to the cultivated man—religion alone is charged to supply to the illiterate. I know that this elementary teaching, naturally persuaded of its own superiority, ends in cramping the minds that are shut up in it. But most of those whom religion cramps were already small before they committed themselves to her; narrow and limited with religion, they would possibly have been wicked without it. Intellectual elevation will always be the property of the few; if these few are at liberty to develop themselves freely, they will give themselves little concern as to the way the rest fashion God after their own proportion. For the people the established dogma possesses neither meanness nor danger, for criticism is not their vocation; and, consequently, superstitions which displease us in the cultivated man charm us in the people. The simple faith is the true faith; and I confess I should be inconsolable if I knew that my writings could ever give offence to one of those artless souls who in spirit adore so truly. But they are protected by their ignorance; the assailable dogmas not being vehicles of explicit affirmation with them, their minds are not disturbed; it is the privilege of pure sentiment to be invulnerable, and to play with poison without being harmed.

The haughty divisions which philosophy is sometimes accused of establishing among men, on the ground of their various religious capacity, is really, then, neither an injury to the mass of men nor is it a result of pride. The fact is,

Science is not made for all ; it supposes a long intellectual education ; years of study and mental habits of which few are capable. But nobody is on this ground excluded from the ideal ; the simple man finds in his natural instincts full compensation for all he lacks on the side of reflexion. Even admitting that great intellectual culture combined with religious sentiment is superior to natural faith, what inference could be drawn from that ? Inequality, at bottom more painful to the privileged than to the inferior, is established by Nature. Mary chooses the better part, but Martha need not be blamed for all that. There is perfect truth here in the theological formula. All have sufficient grace to work out their salvation ; but all are not called to the same degree of beatitude. Every man has a right to his ideal ; but it would give the lie to evidence to claim that all can alike worship the perfect.

It is important to maintain this distinction between religion in its general sense, and the particular forms which on the page of history succeed each other, with different fortunes and different perils. Far from seeking to weaken the religious sentiment, I would gladly contribute something to raise and purify it. It seems to me, in fact, that from the independent study of religion there flows one consoling result which is sufficient to calm the good man and give a ground for the happy life. This result is, that religion being an integral part of human nature, is in its essence true, and that above the special forms of worship, necessarily stained with the defects of the age and the country to which they belong, there remains Religion, a clear proof of man's superior destiny. For if it be demonstrated that religion always has been, and always will be, that which inspires the most of love and hate ; if it be demonstrated that man, by an unconquerable effort, rises to the conception and the adoration of the perfect, is not that the best proof of a Divine Spirit in us, which, by its

aspirations, responds to a transcendent ideal? To my view, I confess, there is no more reassuring thought; yes, here one may pronounce the decisive word certainty, which no special dogma, no formula philosophical or theological can utter. The infinite cannot be inclosed in a system; how can the human mind grasp—how can speech render that whose essence is the unspeakable? But is not this inability of speech and reason to exhaust the idea which we form of the Divine world, the chief element of adoration, and the most significant fact in faith? Far from leading to denial, the philosophical history of religion leads to belief by showing humanity's constant faith in a heavenly principle and a supreme order—not to the belief which by gross symbols materializes its object, but to that which requires no assent to the supernatural in order to seize the ideal, to that, which, to borrow a thought from St. Augustine, sees divinity better in the immutable order of things than in deviation from the eternal order.

Facts now passing before our eyes, which will have weight in the history of the human mind, confirm me in this method respectful at once, and free, by which the passing form is distinguished from the spirit which abides eternally. Indeed whatever reservations one may make on the seriousness and the depth of the religious reaction we are witnessing—a reaction which like all movements of opinion has served in many cases as a cloak for base calculation, and for failing vitality—it cannot be denied that there lurks in it a genuine moral fact. If this reaction has almost everywhere taken the shape of conversion to Catholicism, it is less to catholicism itself, than to the religious sentiment that people are returning. Catholicism being the most characteristic, if I may venture to say so, the most religious of religions, every reaction towards religion necessarily accrues somewhat to its benefit. But, say we, the catholicism with the majority of those who go back to it, is not so

much the collection of credences vast in extent and infinite in detail, that fills the volumes of a theological treatise, as it is religion in its general sense. Among the neophytes who attach themselves to it most zealously, there are few who seriously think of the dogmas they embrace; when these dogmas are explained to them literally, they reject them, or fritter them away by agreeable interpretations; nearly all are heretics without suspecting it. They are brought back to the church by the eternal instinct which leads man to attach himself to a religious creed—instinct so imperious that, rather than rest in doubt, he accepts blindly the faith that he finds ready made. The 18th century, whose commission was to clear from the field of the human mind, a heap of obstacles, which the course of ages had piled on it, carried into this work of destruction the ardour men always put into the discharge of conscientious duties. Skepticism and impiety, or rather the show of skepticism and impiety, for at heart, few ages went about their work with so much conviction and religious devotion, it enjoyed for their own sake, and experienced a kind of pleasure in the acquittal of a task which can rarely be accomplished without tears. But the next generation, come back to the inner life, finding in itself the need of believing, and of communing in faith with other souls, did not comprehend the joy of this first passion, and, rather than remain in a system of negation that had become intolerable, endeavoured to set up again the very doctrines which its fathers overthrew. When people cannot build new churches, they restore and copy old ones; they can dispense with originality in religion, but they cannot dispense with religion. Who, passing through our ancient towns, has not stopped before those gigantic monuments of the antique faith, which alone attract attention, amid the dead level of modern commonplace? Everything around them has been renewed; the cathedral alone remains, a little defaced as

high as a man can reach, but profoundly rooted in the soil. True as it is that in the matter of religious creation the ages have resolved on denying themselves the privilege they so freely grant to the centuries past; it is as true that rational science, being by its nature the prerogative of a small number, cannot, in the actual condition of society, bear upon the credence of the world with a decisive weight.

We perceive now what distance separates the controversialist eager to change existing religious forms, from the scholar who proposes to himself none but a speculative aim with no immediate reference to the actual order of things. A stranger to the causes that produce those brisk changes of opinion which are legitimate in the circle of worldly people, but do not extend beyond it, the scholar is not obliged to put faith in fashionable caprices, nor to submit to silence because his studies have not led him to the ideas which this or that party judges to be most suitable at the moment. The actual regulation of affairs belongs, in fact, to quite other forces than those of science and reason. The thinker regards his title to direct the concerns of his planet as being very frail, and satisfied with his portion, accepts without regret his powerlessness. A spectator in the universe, he knows that the world belongs to him only as an object of study, and that the part of reformer almost always supposes in those who assume it defects and qualities which he has not.

Let us then keep in its place each of these often conflicting elements, which are necessary to complete the development of humanity. Let us allow religions to proclaim themselves unassailable, since otherwise they will not gain due respect from their adherents; but let us not subject science to the censorship of a power that has no scientific character. We will not confound legend with history; but neither will we try to banish legend, for it is the form which the

faith of humanity of necessity assumes. Humanity is not made up of scholars and philologists. It is frequently deceived, or rather it is necessarily deceived in regard to facts and persons; often it misdirects its sympathy and its homage; more often still it exaggerates the rôle of individuals, and heaps the meed of whole generations on the head of a favourite. To see the truth in all this demands a fineness of intellect and a fulness of knowledge it does not possess. But in the object of its worship it is not mistaken, What it adores is really adorable; for what it adores in its ideal characters is the goodness and beauty it has itself put there. It is safe to say that were a new manifestation of religion to break forth, the mythical would find a place in it after the timid measure that our age of reflection admits. Whatever pains might be taken at the start to repel all deviations from the purest rationality, the second generation would doubtless be less puritanical than the first, and the third less still. Thus successive complications would be introduced, amid which the great imaginative instincts of humanity would give themselves full career, and on which criticism, after some generations, would be found resuming its task of analysis and discrimination.

I know that people who are more sentimental than scientific, and more practical than speculative, hardly comprehend the use of such researches, and generally receive them with displeasure. Their feeling is to be respected, and we must be careful not to censure it. I venture to advise those who have it not to read the productions of modern criticism; since they can but provoke in them grievous reactions. The very pain experienced in reading them proves that such reading is not suitable to this class of minds. The conservative mind—at least what is called so—which necessarily borders in many respects on narrowness, is essential to the regulation of this world. A ship without ballast, and overcharged with canvas, is as ill adapted for sailing

as a heavily-laden lighter with no sails at all. Is not Germany's incompetency in action the result of the incomparable gifts in intellectual speculation with which nature has endowed her? The practical man cannot have the mental largeness of the man devoted to thought. On his side, the thinker who will take part in this world's business is committed to a tangle of compromises which belittle him and hurt his genius. Here, as in all things, the wise regulation of the human mind is found in liberty. Let these peaceful and harmless researches be left to pursue in congenial obscurity their own ends. Science would be very rash if she aspired to modify opinion. Her processes have no hold, save on the small number. Repulsive and without charm, how could she compete with the numerous powers which, doubtless with better right, sway the world? All she asks is liberty. Under liberty, minds classify themselves, and each one spontaneously chooses the path that for it is the path of truth.

I am not unmindful of the misunderstandings to which he exposes himself who touches on matters that are objects of credence to a large number of men. But all fine exercise of thought would be forbidden, were we obliged to guess all the possible perversions that prejudiced minds may fall into when reading what they do not understand. Persons unfamiliar with subjects of thought often affect an air of lofty wisdom by falsifying and exaggerating opinions at whose expense they would earn the praise of moderation. By these persons writers must needs be summarily classified: by their leave, one is Pantheist or Atheist without knowing it. They create schools on their own authority; and often one learns from them with some surprise, that he is the disciple of masters he never knew. People of the world are ready enough to claim the merit of good sense by summing up in some absurd and self-refuting phrases the great theses of science or of genius. Thus

Strauss is a madman who called in question the existence of Jesus ; Wolf a fool who denied Homer ; Hegel a fanatic who said there was no difference between yes and no : and were I to say here, that far from denying the existence of Jesus, Strauss supposes it, and affirms it in every page of his book ; that Wolf has impugned only the literary composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey ; that Hegel, even in his boldest formulas, designed merely to signalize the relative and partial character of all our affirmations, I should pass for a disciple of Strauss whom I earnestly opposed ; of Wolf with whom I never meddled ; of Hegel whose intellectual loftiness I admire, but with whom I have little sympathy. Inconveniences of this kind are unavoidable. To distinguish nice shades of thought will always be the business of a small number ; but this small number, in matters that concern works of intellect, is the only body whose verdict should be sought.

Among the objections that I anticipate, there is one which ought to be met here in advance ;—It may be regretted that in broaching certain ideas opposed to the belief generally held in France, I have not felt it my duty to make a more imposing display of demonstration. But this defect is inseparable from the very nature of the fragments composing the present volume. The following essays are not treatises wherein learning and philosophy can give themselves full range ; they are expositions prepared for reviews and journals, wherein results detached from their scientific supports are alone in place. If people will consult the works I review or those I quote on the points in discussion, they will there find the proofs that I could not detail, and to which, besides, I have seldom anything to add. Critical labours designed for periodicals would be impossible if in a book reviewing, one were obliged to set up again all the scaffolding which served the author in the construction of the work. In another

series of labours of a more technical character, particularly in my General History of the Semitic Languages, I have essayed to treat under their more special form some of the problems which here I could present only on their general aspect. What seems to be taken for granted in the glimpses I now open to the public, will one day, I hope, appear in its full light, if, in conformity with a contemplated plan of study on completing the history of the Semitic languages, I am permitted to throw some light on the history of the Semitic religions and the origin of Christianity. I will then spare none of those details which the nature of the writings now collected precludes.

When I began, I proposed replying here to some recent criticisms which, on account of their errors of fact, and the strange reasonings mixed with them, far more than by any weight they had, seemed to call for correction. But the attack regulates the defence, and I would have found it hard to answer sophistry and subtlety without being somewhat sophistical and subtle. The silence I have thus far preserved, and which my enemies are welcome to exult in as an acknowledgment of their victory, I shall preserve still. While I am ready to receive with gratitude, to discuss, to adopt, if need be, all suggestions really scientific that may be addressed to me; I shall to the same degree persist in holding as impertinent the declamations of the sectarian spirit, and in avoiding at all cost the pitiful debate which too often, by substituting personal questions for the pure search for truth, make learning ridiculous. If people imagine that by insults, by false citations, by anonymous and cowardly slanders, by cunning equivocations designed to deceive the uninitiated, they can stay my adopted course of study and thought, they are mistaken. These studies early had for me a supreme interest; they will ever remain under a form more and more extended, the chief object of my investigations. Were I like so many

others the slave of my desires, did interest or vanity guide me in the direction of my labours, people might, no doubt, by such measures force me to abandon studies whose usual reward is abuse. But desiring only to do good—asking no recompense for study but study itself—I am bold to declare, that no human motive has power to make me utter one word more or less than I am determined to say. The liberty I demand being identical with that of science, cannot be refused to me : if the seventeenth century had its Holland, mental restriction, however general, will hardly go so far in our day, that the corner of the world shall be left where a man can think at his ease. Nothing, therefore, shall force me to deviate from the plan that I have marked out, and hold to be the line of my duty ; inflexible search for the truth according to the measure of my ability, by all the means of legitimate investigation which are at the disposal of man ; firm and frank expression of the results that seem to me probable or certain, wholly regardless of their bearing, and careless of conventional opinion ; willingness to correct myself whenever the criticism of competent persons or the advance of knowledge, brings me to it. As to the assaults of ignorance and fanaticism they will afflict without staggering me when I think them sincere ; when I cannot think them so, I hope through practice to reach a serenity that they will not ruffle by an emotion of sadness.

THE RELIGIONS OF ANTIQUITY.

CRITICISM is born in our generation, and it is granted to the most delicate criticism alone to discern, unaffected by dogmatism, as by controversy—the true importance of the study of religions. If man has any dignity, it is in being able to raise himself above the commonplaces of life, and to reach through his moral and intellectual faculties, a world of superior insight and of unselfish joy. Religion is the ideal domain in human life; all it is, is in that saying: “Man lives not by bread alone.” There is, I am aware, another power which claims to take up the spiritual life of humanity, and the moment would be ill chosen to decry it; but we do not disown philosophy, we assign to it its just place, the only place where it is grand, strong, unassailable, when we say that it is not for the multitude. Sublime, as one associates it with the circle of the sages whose nourishment and diversion it has been, in the history of humanity philosophy is an insignificant feature. We might count the souls it has ennobled; we might set down in four pages the history of the small aristocracy that has grouped itself under that banner; the mass abandoned to the torrent of their dreams, their terrors, their enchantments, have rolled on pell-mell through the dangerous valleys of instinct and frenzy, seeking a reason for action and for belief, nowhere, save in the dazzling fancies of their brains and the palpitations of their hearts.

The religion of a people, being the most complete expression of their individuality, is, in one sense, more instructive than their history. In fact, the history of a people

*Criticism
of*

is not altogether their own ; it includes an accidental or a fatal element which is not dependent on the nation, which sometimes crosses its natural development; but the religious legend is really the proper and exclusive work of the genius of each race. India, for example, has not left us one line of history in a strict sense of the word; the learned now and then regret this, and would pay its weight in gold for a piece of chronicle, a list of kings; but, truly, we have something better than that:—we have its poems, its mythology, its sacred books; we have its soul. In the history we might have found a few facts drily told, the true character of which criticism would have seized with the utmost difficulty; the fable gives us, as with the stamp of a seal, a faithful image of the way the people felt and thought, their moral portrait drawn by themselves. What the 18th century regarded as a heap of superstition and puerilities has thus become, in the view of a more perfect philosophy of history, the most curious of documents touching the past of humanity. Studies which once seemed food for light minds have risen to the rank of the highest speculation, and a book devoted to the interpretation of fables which Bayle found fit only to amuse children, has taken its place among the most serious works of our generation.

To appreciate the full importance of this book,—we mean the last mythological encyclopædia which one of the worthiest representatives of French learning has grouped round a recently finished translation of Dr. Fr. Creutzer's *Symbolism*,* —we must go back to the epoch when the meritorious work was undertaken of domesticating here a whole series of studies so flourishing among our neighbours, so neglected among ourselves. When the first vol-

* *Religions de l'antiquité considérées principalement dans leurs formes symboliques et mythologiques*, du Dr. Creuzer, ouvrage traduit et refondu par J. D. Guigniaut. 10 vols. in 8vo. Paris, 1825—1851.

ume of the *Religions of Antiquity* appeared in 1825, it fell in with that movement of curiosity which was then exercising minds, and leading them to seek in history better understood, the solution of problems that were exciting enlightened thought. It is rare that such labours are finished in the midst of the movement that sees them begun; but if the last volumes of the *Religions of Antiquity* have not met the same eager and expectant public that welcomed the first, they have proved at least that there is no change in the zeal of the scholar, who for a quarter of a century has been the interpreter of one of the most important branches of German erudition, and to whom no one will refuse the title of regenerator of mythological study in France.

The translator of the *Symbolism* found these studies sunk among us to the last stage of mediocrity. It was the time when M. Petit-Radel wrote grave dissertations on the adventures of the cow, Io, and arranged in a memoir a comprehensive table of Helen's lovers, with their age, as related to that of "this princess." Germany, on the contrary, initiated into the knowledge of antiquity by the noble generation of Wolfs and Heynes, by its genius too so sympathetic with the religious intuitions of the early ages, was already rich in excellent writings on the old mythologies and their interpretation. The first thing to be done, was to bring up more than a half century of arrears, and to render accessible the treasures of sound learning which Germany had amassed while France kept up the shallow critical traditions of the eighteenth century. The *Symbolism* of M. Creuzer, by its imposing proportions, its European reputation, the elevation of its views, the high philosophy and science displayed by its author, claimed immediate attention. M. Guigniaut, however, saw that the translation of a single book, already distanced in some points of detail by more recent labours, would but imperfectly reach the end he proposed. He therefore resolved to collect about M

Creuzer's book the results of contemporaneous or later labours; in a word, to make of the text of the *Symbolism* the woof of a vast synthesis, embracing all the mythological studies of Germany. Learned Europe long ago pronounced its verdict on the value of the plan, and on the way it has been wrought out. France has recognised in it the model to be imitated in the difficult task of introducing the fruits of German science among us. Germany, on its side, has given to the French edition the highest praise, for it seems to have adopted, on nearly every important point, the modifications suggested by the translator. The book of M. Guigniaut, bravely finished amid shifting and sometimes opposing circumstances, has become the indispensable manual, not only of the antiquarian and philologist, but of all inquisitive minds who believe that the history of religions is one of the most essential elements of the history of the human mind, that is to say, of true philosophy.

I.

Religions strike so deeply into the inmost fibres of the human consciousness, that a scientific explanation of them becomes, from a distance, almost impossible. No efforts of the most subtle criticism can correct the false position in which we find ourselves placed with regard to these primitive works. Full of life, of feeling, of truth for the people who have animated them with their breath, they are but dead letters, sealed hieroglyphics to us; created by the simultaneous effort of all the faculties acting in perfect harmony, they are for us but objects of curious analysis. To construct the history of a religion, one need not believe it now, but one must needs have believed it once. We rightly comprehend no worship save that which has stirred in us the first impulse towards the ideal. Who can be just to

Catholicism if he has not been cradled in that wondrous legend—if, in the music of its hymns, the ceilings of its temples, the symbols of its devotion, he does not revive the first sensation of his religious life? The most essential condition of a fair appreciation of ancient religion will for ever therefore be missing with us, for one must have lived in the bosom of those religions, or at least be able to reproduce the sentiment they convey, with a depth that the most privileged historical genius can scarcely attain. With all our efforts, we shall never so frankly renounce our modern ideas as to find the tissue of fables which is commonly offered as the belief of Greece and Rome, anything but an absurdity unworthy the attention of a serious man. For persons unfamiliar with historical science, it is an endless subject of astonishment to see men who are presented to them as masters of the human mind, adoring gods, drunken and adulterous, and admitting extravagant stories, and scandalous adventures among their religious dogmas. The simplest thinks he has a right to shrug his shoulders at such prodigious infatuation. We must, however, start from this principle, that the human mind is never absurd on purpose, and that whenever the spontaneous creations of the mind appear to us senseless, it is because we do not understand them. When a man has shown capacity to produce such works as Greece has left us, to institute a political lesson like that which carried Rome to universal dominion, would it not be strange if in one respect it had remained on a level with people who were given over to the grossest fetichism? Is it not quite probable that by putting ourselves fairly where these ancients stood, this pretended extravagance would disappear, and we should recognise that fables, like all other products of human nature, were once in a degree rational? Good sense is all of one piece, and it would be inexplicable if nations which, in civil and political life, in art, poetry, philosophy, have filled

up the measure of man's ability, had not in religion surpassed worships whose absurdity is now revolting to the reason of a child.

For the rest, this misunderstanding is of very old date. Not in modern times has Paganism begun to be the object of perpetual falsification. It is evident that antiquity itself had ceased to comprehend its religion, and that the old myths, the flowering of the primitive imagination, early lost their significance. The idea of making a chronological cabinet of them, a sort of staple entertaining history, dates not from Boccaccio or from Demoustier. Ovid illustrated it in a book but little more respectable than the *Letters to Emilie*. I would not contemptuously overlook the charm there is in this endless wreath of witty stories and piquant metamorphoses; but what sacrilege, in a religious light, this making sport of symbols consecrated by time, wherein, too, man had deposited his first views of the divine world! Mascarelli's design of setting the whole history of Rome to madrigals was more rational than the undertaking to travesty ancient *theologoumena* into immodest tales which are as much like the original myths as old paper flowers, yellow and smoky, are like the flowers of the fields.

Now, this style of dealing with the religions of antiquity belonged to all mythologists nearly down to our own time. *Mythology* [this was the word which designated those compilations of grotesque and commonly indecent stories] became a series of *biographies*, in which, under sacred texts, they narrated the unedifying life of Mercury, the intrigues of Venus, the domestic passages of Jupiter and Juno. Far from regretting the discredit which our age has cast on the common use of these fables, the astonishment is that so many fine minds of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should not have felt their insipidity.

When science began to apply itself seriously to the interpretation of ancient symbols, its efforts in France at least

were hardly more happy. France is not the country for mythological studies; the French mind lacks that flexibility, that facility of reproducing the intuitions of former ages which are so essential for the understanding of religions. The scholars of the old school, Jean Leclerc, Banier, Larcher, Clavier, Petit-Radel, did not rise above a coarse Evhemerism,* or a system of allegorical explanations quite as superficial; fortunate when, resisting the prejudices which seduced Bochart, Huet, Bossuet, and the whole theologic school, they did not look for an altered form of the Bible traditions in the mythology of Greece! The critics who were inspired by the philosophy of the eighteenth century, Boulanger, Bailly, Dupuis, abandoned this method only to try a symbolism less satisfactory still. Sainte-Croix carried into the studies of the mysteries a more solid erudition, but an insight as dull as that of his predecessors. Finally, Emeric David, in his *Jupiter*, gave the finishing touch to the French symbolism. His system is very simple: it is unmixed *allegorism*. "Mythology is a collection of riddles calculated to give a knowledge of the nature of the gods and the dogmas of religion, to people who get at their secret." The word to be guessed, holds the dogma. Thus by substituting for the name of Apollo, the word "*Sun*;" by reading "*sea*" instead of Amphitrite, all is told, for the key lies in a single word. Trying afterwards to disengage the religious doctrines hidden under these enigmas, Emeric David finds seven, which sum up the Greek theology. Mythology is thus a sort of catechism in *conundrums*; the fables have been simply *invented* to cover dogmas; each one has a very clean and a very definite sense. How did this enigmatical form help to render the dogma more intelligible? How could the human mind, possessed of a clear

* The reader recollects that Evhemerus saw in the gods only men who had been deified.

thought, have hit on the fancy of explaining it by a thought more obscure? How could a whole race have let itself be ensnared by this passion for puzzles, purely for the puzzle's sake? You need not put such questions to Emeric David. Had not Locke taught that the human mind proceeds from the simple to the complex; that in order to associate two ideas it must first have held them apart? To assert that in the human mind the notion of a thing does not precede the sign of it; that man spontaneously creates the symbol without knowing precisely what he puts into it, would probably have been unintelligible at a period when people were convinced that the mind had always proceeded according to the rules laid down by the Abbé Condillac.

While France tried to interpret the religions of antiquity after its superficial philosophy, Germany penetrated them by its kindred religious genius rather than by the solidity of its erudition. Goethe centred his poetic life in Olympus. Lessing and Winklemann, the hebraic Herder himself, discovered in the ancient worships the religion of beauty. Goerres looked there for the foundations of his mysticism. Schelling thought it no digression in his writings on the transcendental philosophy, to descant (with but little success, to be sure) on the gods of Samothrace. A crowd of philologists and antiquarians tried to decipher in the written and graven monuments of antiquity, the meaning of the great enigma bequeathed to science by the primitive world. As the result of this accumulation of facts and systems, appeared from 1810 to 1812 the work which was to condense the whole early movement of mythological study, the *Symbolism* of Dr. Frederic Creuzer. It was a great phenomenon, something like a revelation, the sight of all the gods of mankind, Indian, Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician, Etruscan, Grecian, Roman, brought together for the first time in a scientific *pintheon*. The sustained elevation, the deep religious tone, the sense of the higher destinies of

the race that breathed through the book, announced that a great revolution was accomplished, and that a better school reconciled by synthesis with the whole of human nature, was about to succeed an age which was irreligious because it was exclusively analytical. The neo-platonic spirit of Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus seemed to revive in this grand philosophic method of interpreting the antique symbols, and the shade of Julian must have trembled with delight, on hearing a doctor of Christian theology take up his thesis, proclaim that paganism might suffice for the deepest needs of the soul, and absolve the noble minds who, at the supreme hour, endeavoured to warm in their bosoms the fainting gods.*

It is especially true in historical science, that the characteristics of a method are its defects, and that what constitutes the truth and force of a system also constitutes its error and weakness. That mystical enthusiasm, the first impulse of the philosophy of nature, then growing in Germany, that sympathetic style which marked a real progress in mythological study, must have had its excesses, and in some degree its delirium. As compared with the cold, unintelligent dissertations of the French school, M. Creuzer has all the faults of his Alexandrian masters; the symbolic exaggeration, too marked a disposition to look for mystery everywhere, an inclination to join things sundered which sometimes runs into intemperance. Jamblichus and Nonnus figure by the side of Hesiod and Homer, as interpreters of the same myth. In his eyes, the Alexandrians are good expositors, true restorers of paganism, who often by their philosophical insight arrived at the original sense of dogmas; the Orphics themselves, so suspected of charlatanism, had preserved the spirit of the primitive religion. It seems that time had no existence for M. Creuzer. He

* See *Religions de l'Antiquité*, vol. I. page 3, and vol. II. page 830.

looks too high for his solutions, because he lives too much aloft himself, because he has no feeling for the simple, natural, childlike life, wholly sensuous, yet wholly divine, which the first Indo-Hellenic races lived. One must have a soul intoxicated with poetry to comprehend the ravishing delirium that the man of those races felt in the presence of nature and of himself. We, accustomed to look for good sense everywhere, insist on finding deep combinations where there was only instinct and fancy. We, serious and positive, exhaust our philosophy in following the dream plots of a child.

The Greek mythology, or, in a more general sense, the mythology of the Indo-European peoples, taken in its first flight simply reflects the sensations of young and delicate organs without a trace of dogmatism, a vestige of theology or a shade of limitation. One might as well explain the sound of bells or look for shapes in clouds as hunt for a precise meaning in these dreams of the golden age. Primitive man sees nature with the eyes of a child; now the child overlays all things with the marvellous that he finds in himself. The charming little intoxication of life which makes him giddy, causes him to see the world through a softly colored vapour; casting on every object a curious and joyous look, he smiles at all things, and all things smile at him. We undeceived by experience, expect nothing extraordinary from the infinite combination of things; but the child knows not what may come from the sportive throwing of the dice that goes on before him—he believes more in the possible, for he knows less of the actual. Hence his joys and his terrors; he creates his own fantastic world, which by turns enchants and frightens him. He tells his dreams; he has not that sharp analysis which, in a reflecting age, places us face to face with reality as cold observers. Such was the primitive man. Hardly detached from nature, he conversed with her, spoke to her, heard her voice; that

great mother to whom he was still arterially bound, seemed to him living and breathing. The sight of physical phenomena made on him various impressions which, taking body from his imagination, became his gods. He adored his sensations; or to speak more correctly, the vague and unknown object of his sensations; for not yet distinguishing object from subject, the world was himself, and he was the world. In presence of the sea, for example, of its voluptuous lines, of its hues now brilliant now sombre, the sense of the vague, the sad, the infinite, the terrible, the beautiful which rose in his soul, revealed to him a complete group of melancholy, capricious, many-formed, impalpable gods. Dissimilar were the impressions and the divinities of the mountains, dissimilar those of the land; quite different those of the flame and the volcano, quite different again those of the air and its varied phenomena. In this way, nature reflected herself completely, in these primitive souls, under the shape of nameless deities.

"It seems," says M. Creuzer, "as if one were dealing not with men like ourselves, but with elementary spirits, endowed with a marvellous insight into the very nature of things; with a kind of magnetic power to see and comprehend every thing." Hence those mysterious races, the Telchines of Rhodes, the Curetes of Crete, the Dactyles of Phrygia, the Carcines and the Sintiers of Lemnos, the Cabires of Samothrace, fantastical and magical races, like the *Trolls* of Scandinavia, in immediate communication with the forces of nature. Every thing that struck man, every thing that excited in his soul the sentiment of the divine, was a god or the attribute of a god; a great river, a high mountain, a star remarkable for its splendour, or the peculiarity of its course,—a thousand objects whose symbolical sense has vanished for us. Examine the spots which antiquity holds sacred, it will always be impossible to discover the motive that could have made people suppose the



Divinity was more present there than elsewhere. Those spots, aside from the associations that attach to them, tell us very little. The Capitol, regarded simply as a hill, has not much character; Lake Avernus, which struck the imagination of the ancients so vividly, presents to us a sweet little landscape, nothing more.

To pretend to seize the gossamer threads of these first religious intuitions and to describe the capricious path of the imagination in these delicate creations which man and nature with the most cordial understanding combined to form, would be like feeling after the track of the bird in the air. A fact of history, a moral thought, a glimpse of atmospherical, geological, astronomical phenomena, a keen sensation, a fright, found expression in a myth. Language itself, says M. Creuzer, was a fruitful mother of gods and heroes. The trait which characterizes wit in its most attenuated form, the play on words, the pun, was one of the most familiar sources of the primitive mythology. Many an important myth of antiquity rests on nothing firmer than a fanciful etymology, an alliteration such as gives sport to the imagination of a child. Witness the ivory shoulder of Pelops, *Drepane* and the sickle of Ceres, *Tarsus* and the winged heels of Perseus. In other cases distortions, literal mistakes gave birth to fantastic tales. It is thus that the Nile vase—the *canope* surmounted by a human head, whose image doubtless struck the first Greek that travelled in Egypt—became, through a long course of cock and bull stories, a Greek hero who assisted at the siege of Troy. The hero, Cantharus, originated in a similar way from the cantharus or drinking cup, and was at once the vase and the companion of Bacchus. Finally almost imperceptible associating of ideas, rhythmical motives such as determined the contour of an arabesque, presided at the formation of these strange fables. Why are Neptune and the horse, Venus and the sea constantly associated? Perhaps no other

reason is to be sought than the infinite grace of the liquid element, the undulations of its surface, and the resemblance of its harmonious curves to the flexible lines of the loveliest type of animal nature.

It is impossible, we perceive, to classify gods that come from all the four winds of heaven. Indefiniteness of meaning, under the utmost definiteness of form, is the essential character of the art as of the mythology of Greece. Mythology is a second speech, born like the first from the echo of nature in the mind, as inexplicable by analysis as the first, but whose mystery is disclosed to him that can comprehend the hidden spontaneous forces, the secret accord of nature and the soul, the perpetual hieroglyphic that suggests the expression of human sentiment. Each god thus represents to us a finished epoch, a region of ideas, a tone in the harmony of things. It is not enough to say with the old allegorical school: "Minerva is prudence, Venus is beauty." Minerva and Venus are feminine nature looked at on its two sides:—the spiritual and saintly, the esthetic and voluptuous. If Mercury were only the god of thieves, and Bacchus the god of wine, as the children are told, they would be fictions of moderate ingenuity, very poor figures of rhetoric, suitable to Boileau's epopee; but antiquity never adored gods so grossly puerile. Mercury is human nature viewed in its aptitudes and industry, the youth beautiful in his vigor and suppleness, the pattern of a gymnast. On the other hand, all the ideas of juvenility, pleasure, voluptuousness, adventure, easy triumph, terrible passion, gathered about Bacchus. He stands for the brilliant side of life: he is the boy cherished by the nymphs, always young, handsome, fortunate, waited on with caresses and kisses; his soft languor, his yielding form, his roundness, his feminine type often degenerating into the hermaphrodite, disclose a less noble origin. Compared with the Greek god par excellence, Apollo, he is a stranger, who, in spite

of a long sojourn in Greece, has not lost his Asiatic air; he is clad in a long Thracian garment (*Cassaride*), for he is afraid to go naked; his brow is encircled by the oriental mitre because his hair is insufficient to crown it.

One of the myths which seem to me calculated to convey an idea of these extreme complexities, these fugitive aspects, and these numberless contradictions of the ancient fables, is that of Glaucus, an humble myth, to be sure, a myth of poor people; but, for that very reason, retaining all its original and popular character. Those who have passed their infancy on the borders of the sea, know how many associations of deep and poetical ideas are formed in presence of the lively spectacles from the shore. Glaucus is the personification and the exponent of these ideas and impressions,—a god created by sailors, summing up the whole poetry of sea life, as it appears to poor people. Old age oppresses him; a prey to despair, he plunges into the sea and becomes a prophet; prophet of misfortune, sad old man, he is wet sometimes, his body wasted by the action of the water, covered with shells and marine plants. According to others, he plunged into the waves, because he could not prove his immortality. From this time he makes a yearly visit to the banks and islands. In the evening, when the wind pipes, Glaucus—that is to say, the yellow wave—rises and utters loud oracles. The fishermen crouch in the bottom of their boats, and endeavour by fasting, by prayers, by incense, to turn aside the evils that impend. Glaucus, however, mounted on a rock, in angry tones threatens their fields and flocks, and bewails his immortality. They told, also, of his amours—loves, sad, unfortunate, ending like a painful dream. He loved a beautiful mermaid, named Scylla. One day, hoping to touch her, he brought for her amusement shells and young halcyons without feathers. She saw his tears, and took pity on them; but Circe, through jealousy, poisoned the young girl's bath, and she became a bark-

ing monster, the personification of the natural horror which the squalls and perils of the Sicilian sea inspire. The poor Glaucus, from this moment, is awkward, mischievous, complaining, spiteful. He is seen on monuments with his beard of sea-weeds, his gaze fixed, his brows contracted. The Loves make merry at his expense:—one pulls his hair; another slaps him. Sometimes he is *Glaucé*, that is the tint between green and blue which the shallow sea assumes when it reposes on a white sand; the colour of the sea thus becomes a woman, as the fleecy crest of the waves becomes the white head of the *Grees* (old women) who terrify the sailors. Sometimes it is Lamia, who attracts men and seduces them by her charms; at other times a hawk that circles and plunges on his prey; then again, an insatiable siren holding a youth by each hand. Mix up all the ideas of seafaring people, jumble the vagaries of a sailor's dream, and you have the myth of Glaucus; a haunting melancholy, troublesome and formless dreams, a keen sense of all the apparitions of the waves, perpetual disquiet, danger everywhere, seduction everywhere, the uncertain future, the strong impression of fatalism. Glaucus is at once the colour and the sound of the sea; the billow that whitens, the reflection of the skies on the back of the surge, the evening wind which foretells the next day's storm, the plunging movement, the stunted forms of the mermen—the impotent desires, the sad returns of solitary life, the doubt, the struggle, the despair, the long weariness of a fixed condition, wasted on illusion, and the mournful immortality which can neither get assurance nor deliverance, painful riddle, echo of that dismal feeling which suggests to man his unknown origin and his divine destiny; truth which to his sorrow he cannot prove; for it is above his understanding, and man can neither demonstrate it nor avoid it. ○

We see how these delicate and scarcely tangible sketches, these vestiges of fugitive impressions, must appear unintel-

ligible to an age of advanced reflection. The ancients often felt the same embarrassment before their mythology that we feel. They wished to find reality in the vague images, to give body to the dreams. But such was the indefinite character of the antique fables, that each could find in them what he looked for. Some adopted the flatly impious system of Evhemerus, who explained all the marvellous traditions by historical facts. Others, imbued with a higher philosophy, sought in the myths a symbolical rendering of their philosophy. The gods of pure antiquity eat and drink. That means, said Proclus, they incessantly create by the mingling of infinite and finite; ambrosia, the solid food, represents the finite; nectar the liquid food stands for the infinite. Uranus, Saturn and Jupiter are with Plotinus, the three principles of the intelligible world, the one Intelligence and Soul. Jupiter begetting Venus is the universal soul outwardly producing itself. Saturn devouring his children is Intelligence whose law is to re-enter ceaselessly into itself. Thus all was allegory and metaphor. The flowers opening to the sun in the early season, the charming childishness of the nascent consciousness became in the hands of philosophical pedantry, cold and graceless enigmas. If there is one myth which has preserved, most transparently, through the covering of anthropomorphism the trace of the primitive nature worship, it is without dispute, that of the nymphs. It is hardly necessary to change their names and attributes to discover the springs and flowing waters in these fresh, living, delicate, bounding, smiling, now visible, now invisible divinities, which leap among the rocks waltzing and singing like children, with sweet mysterious voice, never sleeping, spinning the sea-green wool, or weaving the purple stuff in the rocks, pitiful goddesses who cure maladies and sometimes ravish and kill. Yet, from this source Porphyry in his "Cave of the Nymphs"

will draw a complete philosophy. Nymphs are souls; their veil is the body; the cave is the world. The interior of the cave represents the sensible dark side; the exterior the intelligible luminous side, &c.

The fundamental defect in M. Creuzer's system is that it considers paganism too exclusively in this mystical and philosophical aspect. It is as if from the works of the new Catholic School, one should reconstruct the theory of primitive Christianity. The myth has really its full significance in those epochs only when man having no definite notion of natural laws, feels that he still lives in a divine world. Now, long before the decline of paganism, that first simplicity had disappeared. The supernatural was merely the miraculous, that is, a deviation from the established order by divinity; a conception radically different from that of the primitive man, for whom there was no natural order but a continual play of living and free powers. At that ancient period there was nothing that could be called dogma—positive religion—a sacred book. The child does not dispute, has no need of answers for he lays down no problem; for him all is clear. The glory with which the world shines in his eyes, the deified life, the poetic cry of his soul, that was his worship, a celestial worship involving an unselfish act of adoration and free from all the subtlety of reflection.

It is then a very grave mistake to suppose that men at a remote period created those symbols for the purpose of covering dogmas, and with a distinct view of the dogma and of the symbol. All that is born simultaneously of one union, and in one moment, like thought and word, idea and expression. The myth does not include two elements, an envelope and a thing inclosed; it is indivisible. The question—did the primitive man comprehend or did he not, the sense of the myths he created?—is put aside, for in the myth the meaning was not distinct from the object.

The man comprehended the myth without seeing anything beyond it, as a simple thing and not as two things. The abstract language which we are obliged to use in explaining the old fables must not deceive us. Our habits of analysis compel us to separate the sign from the thing signified; but for the spontaneous man the moral and religious thought came wrapped in the myth as in its natural garment. The primitive age was neither grossly fetichistic, for everything had a significance for it; nor finely spiritualistic, for it conceived nothing in an abstract way without sensible covering; it was an age of confused unity in which man saw the two worlds open before him, one in the other, and one expressing the other.

Grant that in antiquity there were allegories, properly so called—personifications of moral beings—such as Hygeia, Victory, patrician Modesty, womanly Fortune, Sleep, &c.; admit that there were myths invented or at least developed by reflection like that of the Psyche; no one will deny it. But a deep line of separation exists between these clear, simple, spiritual allegories, and those old enigmas real productions of the Sphinx, in which the idea and the symbol are absolutely inseparable. M. Creuzer saw plainly enough that the meaning of the ancient symbols was lost at a very remote period; that Homer already was a bad theologian; that his gods were but poetic personages on a level with men, leading a free and joyous life divided between pleasure and activity, like the chiefs of the Hellenic tribes; that the most dignified myths became in his hands piquant histories, pretty themes for narratives coloured with the tints of humanity. But was it fair to conclude from this, that before the age of the epic, there was a grand age of theology, during which Greece, of course, became a priestly country with a rooted religion, venerated symbols, ecclesiastical institutions, and a basis of monotheism borrowed from the East? We think not. Let people say as much

as they will, that the Hellenic period was one of religious decadence, of triumph of hero and poet over priest, of a religion popular, clear, facile, but empty of meaning as regarded the sacred arcana, laic in a word—it does not follow from this that the Pelasgians had a definite theology, an intelligent symbolism, an organized priesthood. "People," says Ottfried Müller, "always start from this supposition, that a poet, an ancient sage, would purposely have wrapped clear ideas in symbols and allegorical myths, which later must have been taken for real facts and detailed as history. But the epoch we are dealing with, representing all the relations of divinity, of nature, and of man as so many distinct persons, so many significant acts, what we call mistake or misconception existed in the principle that lay at the heart of the myth itself, and was not brought to it from the outside."

It would be an extravagance, as opposed to the truth of history as to a sound view of human nature, to claim that the Hellenic religion was wholly wanting in sacerdotal and dogmatical organization. The oracles, that at Delphi in particular, were like a permanent revelation, revered even by the polity which used them. What is the "Theogony" of Hesiod but the first rudiment of a national theology, an essay towards the organization of the city of the gods and their history, as the tribes and cities of Greece tended of their own motion to form a solid national organization? The name of Orpheus serves, we cannot doubt, to cover an attempt of the same kind. Later, the mysteries gathered into their bosom the elements of the most finished religious life. It must nevertheless be confessed that Greece was not destined to be an ecclesiastical land. All the great revolutions of Greece, the successive conquests of the Hellenes, the Heracleidæ, the Dorians, are so many triumphs of the lay spirit, so many outbreaks of popular energy against the imposition of sacerdotal usage. The priest, remanded to the temple, will henceforth be of small account: the poet

has nothing more to do with him. Homer constantly exalts the poet at the expense of the sacrificers and soothsayers. Here is the charm of the Homeric world: it is the awakening of the common life, liberty disporting in the full sunshine, humanity coming out of its cellars and shaking off its sleep to spring to the field of warlike activity, and to revel in the thousand adventures of heroic life. The same revolution goes on in art. Sacred art, limited in its types, sacrificing form to meaning, beauty to mysticism, gives place to an art more disinterested, whose aim is to excite the sentiment of beauty, and not the sentiment of sanctity. India thinks of no better way to exalt its gods than heaping signs on signs, and symbols on symbols; Greece, under better inspiration, fashions them after its image, as Helen honours Minerva of Lindos by offering her a cup of yellow amber, made the size of her bosom.

Doubtless the symbolism lost something in this transformation. The modest Venus of the earliest ages had a holier character than the deified courtesan who sat enthroned on the altars when Praxiteles with the folds of her robe let fall that air of reserve which still showed the goddess. We fancy too, that by a feeling very common to epochs of religious decadence, the later devotees of paganism may have been seized with a retrospective admiration for the rigid forms of sacerdotal art. Thus in our time, the coarse art of the middle age appeared to many the genuine form of religious art. Indeed it cannot be denied that the Christian mystery, as mystery, was much better understood by Giotto and Perugino than by Leonardo da Vinci and Titian. M. Creuzer, however, exaggerates a partial truth when he sees a decadence, a sacrilegious travesty in the process by which the gods were stripped of their higher physical significance and converted into purely human personages. It would be easy to show that, even from a religious point of view, this was a real gain. Phidias was not a scoffer, as

some would have us believe, because he sought the type of his Jupiter in his own thought and not in tradition. Respectable testimonies aver on the contrary that this modification of art corresponded to a new birth of religion and contributed to re-ignite piety in souls. They were esteemed unhappy who died without having seen the image of the Olympian Jupiter, and their religious initiation was deemed defective because they had not contemplated the highest realization of the ideal. Is not the human form the most expressive of symbols? Will any say that the canopi, the jar-gods, the swathed dwarfs, of the cabiric age were more significant than the gods that sprang into life from the chisel of Praxiteles and Phidias? It must be remembered besides, that Greece seized a thousand analogies between human forms and pure ideas which escape us, and that failing to catch the meaning of actual nature, it saw every thing transformed into a living being. The country which raised Philip of Crotona to the rank of the demi-gods, because he was the most beautiful Greek of his time, is the same that represented the country by a faun; that in denoting a fountain, instead of shade, water, and verdure, made the figure of a woman's head with fishes in her hair, and that found no more suitable epithet for a river than καλλιπαρθενος (the lovely virgin) in view of the whiteness of the waves which in its imagination took the shape of young girls.

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II.

The chief mistake of M. Creuzer was indicated by the title of his book. It is too *symbolic*. Always full of theology and sacerdotal institutions, misconceiving the artless and popular side of antiquity, he looks for abstract and dogmatic ideas in light creations, which often contain nothing but the joyous trifles of childhood. Persuaded

that the religion of Greece must, like others, have had a sacerdotal period, and meeting nothing of this kind in the spontaneous creations of the Greek genius, he throws himself back on the colonies and the influences derived from the East. To this double exaggeration corresponded, in the movement of mythological studies in Germany, a double reaction; to the excess of symbolism, a negative and anti-symbolic school opposed itself, represented by Voss, G. Hermann and Lobeck; the abuse of Oriental influences was resisted by the purely hellenic school of MM. Otfried Müller, Welcker, and others.

J. H. Voss was unquestionably the roughest adversary the Symbolism at first encountered. A zealous Protestant and an avowed rationalist, he thought he saw in Dr. Creuzer's work a dangerous tendency towards the mystical doctrines then springing up in Germany. This book which many timid consciences in France regard as a work of intolerable audacity, was in the Germany of 1820, received as a Catholic manifesto, an apology for the priesthood and the theocracy. Some conversions which made a good deal of noise, in particular that of Count Frederic of Stolberg, came in to fortify the fears of Voss in regard to the dangers of the league which he supposed had been formed between the Symbolical System and the Roman propaganda. In M. Creuzer, he fancied he saw a disguised agent of the Jesuits, and undertook the examination of his book in seven consecutive numbers of the *Literary Gazette* of Jena (May, 1821). The bitter tone of this criticism made the friends of M. Creuzer indignant. The author of the "Symbolism" replied to the diatribes of Voss by a little piece in which he contemptuously declined entering into discussion with an adversary incapable of conceiving the spirit of his theories, for the understanding of which sentiment and poetic taste were as necessary as learning and analysis. Voss returned to the charge and published at

Stuttgart, in 1824, his "Anti-symbolism," a learned pamphlet, filled with the most irritating personalities. On all sides, a cry was raised against such violent polemics; M. Creuzer felt it his duty to be silent.

In M. Lobeck, the "Symbolism" found an adversary more moderate in his terms, but equally narrow. The "Ag-laophamus" (1829) is a flat denial of M. Creuzer's system. Never did criticism run more rapidly from one pole to another; never did opposite qualities and defects establish between two men a more absolute dissonance. Led astray by the neo-platonic exegesis, M. Creuzer supposed high antiquity to be far more mystical than it really was; M. Lobeck positive, analytical, convinced that horror of mysticism is the beginning of wisdom, seems to take pleasure in reducing it to insignificance. Wherever M. Creuzer discovers high moral thought, rites holy and dignified, M. Lobeck describes nothing but obscene buffoonery and childishness. The ancient pelasgian religion, wherein M. Creuzer thought he detected an emanation of the Oriental symbolism, is but an absurd and coarse fetichism, in the eyes of M. Lobeck; those mysteries, the remains, according to M. Creuzer, of a pure, primeval worship, are to M. Lobeck only juggleries analogous to those of the Masonic lodges. Full of holy indignation at what Voss called "the allegorical filth," the "lies of Plato," he haughtily repels every interpretation that wears a religious badge. M. Creuzer, drawn on by his vivid imagination, constantly oversteps the bounds of admitted knowledge. M. Lobeck is never happier than when he can deny, and can show that his predecessors have asserted too much. No mythologist has equalled him as a critic of original texts; but if he compares texts, it is not to get light out of them—it is to grind them together, and show that nought but darkness is there. The conclusion of his book is that we know nothing about the ancient religions, and that there is not

even room for conjecture. His attacks, moreover, do not stop at the religions of antiquity. It is not towards Eleusis and Samothrace alone, that M. Lobeck shows himself irreverent and mocking. Every form of religion that supposes a priesthood and mysteries, is repugnant to him. Pitiless towards popular superstitions, he is more so towards the interpreters who would find in them a lofty sense. Religion and philosophy, in his view, have nothing to do with each other; the neo-platonists are impudent forgers, who have only succeeded in marring the face of the old religion without rendering it more acceptable. What is the use of trying to be absurd half way? What is the use of sweating blood and water to find sense, where there is none?

If M. Lobeck possesses eminently the faculties of the critic, we must own that he lacks one sense, for mythological interpretation—the religious sense. One would say, in sooth, while reading him, that mankind invented religion for amusement, as they invented charades and conundrums. M. Lobeck exults in demonstrating that the ancient religion was a mere tissue of anachronisms and contradictions, that no two writers on myths can be found who agree on the dates, places, genealogies; but what has he proved by this? Simply one point,—that mythology must not be dealt with as a real thing, that its essence is contradiction. Now, it is precisely for this reason that criticism has an ill-grace, when it demands history where there is nothing historic, and reason where nothing rational is proposed.

Certainly it is good that there should be minds of the stamp of M. Lobeck's; but it is important to maintain that a method like his can satisfy neither philosophy nor criticism. Nothing is gained by attacking religion with the positive intellect, for religion is of another order. The religious sentiment carries its certainty in itself, and reason can neither fortify nor weaken it. It is superfluous to re-

proach religions with the absurdities that they may present to the view of common sense; it is like arguing with love, and proving to passion that it is unreasonable. If the Eleusinian drama were represented before us, it would probably have the effect of a miserable parade; and yet, will you doubt the veracity of the thousand witnesses who attest the consoling virtue and the moral efficacy of these sacred ceremonies? Did Pindar speak seriously, or did he not, when he said of the mysteries of Ceres: "Happy he, who, after having beheld this spectacle, descends into the bowels of the earth! He knows the end of life; he knows its divine origin?" Was Andocides joking in the face of the Athenians when, exhorting them to gravity and justice, he said: "You have contemplated the holy rites of the goddesses to the end that you should punish impiety, and should be saviours of those who defend themselves against injustice." The sincere Protestant, looking on at Catholic ceremonies, feels only indifference or disgust; and yet, these rites are full of charm for those who have been accustomed to them from infancy. This is why every word of contempt and levity is misplaced when we are dealing with the practices of a religion. Nothing is significant in itself, and man finds in the object of his worship nothing but what he puts there. The altar on which the patriarchs laid sacrifices to Jehovah was, materially, nothing but a pile of stones; and yet, regarded in its religious significance, as a symbol of the abstract and formless God of the Semitic people, that pile of stones was as sacred as a Greek temple. We must not ask reasons of the religious sentiment. The wind bloweth where it listeth. If it chooses to associate the ideal with this, with that, what have you to say?

While the skeptical professor of Königsberg used all the resources of his learning and critical acumen to strip the gods of their glory, and to cheapen the secret of the mys-

teries, mythological science aspired more and more to plant itself on the clear basis of history, at an equal remove from the mystical fancies of M. Creuzer, and from the anti-religious prejudices of M. Lobeck. Buttmann, Voelcker, Schwank, by philosophy and the study of texts; Welcker, Gerhardt and Panofka, by archæology and the study of monuments, tried to seize, among these different presumptions, the exact shade of the truth. All, or nearly all, agree in acknowledging, against M. Creuzer, the originality of the Greek mythology. All agree in rejecting, as a blasphemy, the proposition that Greece was ever a province of Asia; that the Greek genius, so free, so untrammelled, so limpid, owed anything to the obscure genius of the East. Doubtless, the primitive populations of Greece and Italy, like all the branches of the wide European family, preserved, in their religious ideas, as well as in their speech, the traits common to the race to which they belonged, and this primitive parentage may be recognised still in some striking resemblances. But that is not the question; for these identical principles, which all the people of the great race carried with them as provision for their voyage, are found as much among the Germans, the Celts, the Slaves, whom we never think of placing under the tutelage of the Orient. It is important to maintain the independent development of the hellenic mind in its essential parts; to contend that, excepting the first spark and some accessions of secondary moment, Greece owes nothing, save to its gods, its seas, its skies, its mountains; that this favoured corner of the earth, this divine leaf of the mulberry flung into the midst of the ocean, saw the chrysalis of the human consciousness bloom in its natural beauty for the first time. This is why Greece is truly a Holy Land for him whose civilization is worship. Here is the secret of that invincible charm she has always exerted over men initiated into liberal life. The true beginnings of the human mind are

there; all the nobles of the intellect recognise there the country of their fathers.

At the head of this exclusively hellenic school, stands the rare man whom the sun of Delphos carried away too soon for science, who in a life of forty years learned how to indicate or to solve, with marvellous sagacity, the most delicate problems in the history of the hellenic races. I speak of Ottfried Müller. While admitting, with M. Creuzer, a mysterious cultus among the most ancient populations of Greece, M. Müller differs wholly from the chief of the symbolic school in rejecting the out-worn hypothesis of oriental colonies, and in denying the sacerdotal and theological cast of the primitive worships. The religion of the Pelasgians was the adoration of nature, apprehended chiefly by sense and imagination. The Earth Mother (Da-Mater) and the deities of the nether world, such as Persephone, Hades, Hermes, Hecate, whose worship was perpetuated in the mysteries, were gods of the Thracian and Pelasgic tribes from whom the Hellenes borrowed their mythological credences to transform them after their more moral and less cosmic mode of conception. These worships were neither primitive revelations nor institutions imported from abroad, but simply expressions of the genius, the manners, the political life of the several tribes of Greece. The distinction of races thus becomes, in the hands of Ottfried Müller, the basis of mythological interpretation. Hence came those excellent monographs on the Dorians, the Minyens, the Etruscans; those delicate researches on the nationality of each god and his successive conquests. The struggle of Hermes and Apollo, is the struggle of the old rural divinities of Arcadia with the nobler divinities of the conqueror; the inferiority of the vanquished races shows itself in the subordinate rank of their gods; admitted by favour into the hellenic Olympus, they attain to no eminence there, and only come to be heralds and messengers

of the rest. What, in fact, is Apollo but the incarnation of the Dorian genius? No mysticism in his worship, no orgie, none of that savage enthusiasm which characterized the Phrygian religions. Hostile to the laborious agricultural gods of the Pelasgians, this ideal type of the Dorian has no mission on the lower earth but that of the warrior, the avenger, the protector, the chastiser; labour is beneath him. What is Artemis, at his side, but the feminine personification of the same genius—the Dorian virgin whom a male education has made the equal of men—chaste, proud, her own mistress, needing neither protector nor master? How remote from these Pelasgic deities, hardly detached from the earth, covered with sweat and smoke, as if they had just come from the laboratories of nature, exposing their artless obscenity without shame! Here we have immaculate gods, exempt from effort and from trouble: physical phenomena no longer make the canvas for the divine myths; humanity is decidedly in the ascendant.

Gifted with an admirable historic perception, with a just and fine mind, Otfried Müller had marked out the way to a truly scientific mythology. And we may believe that, but for the deplorable accident* which took him away from science so young, he would have corrected the trifling stiffness of his first manner. So fluid and inconsistent are the ancient myths, that no exclusive system applies to them, and one can only venture to make an assertion in a matter so delicate on condition of following it with numberless qualifications which nearly take back all that had been said before. Let him say, for example, Apollo is a Dorian god, Apollo presents, in the first instance, no solar characteristic; nothing truer as announcing merely a general trait, an approximation. But if more be intended, M. Creuzer will

* He died at Athens in 1849, from the effects of a sun-stroke, which he had received while visiting the ruins of Delphos.

show you that the identity of helios and Apollo, though not at first so apparent as it became later, still existed at the bottom of the Greek idea, and that the arrows of the divine archer are also the rays of the orb that darts life and death. Alas! the unfortunate Otfried was to feel the fatal influence. "Unhappy man," wrote M. Welcker to the translator of the *Symbolism*, "he had always disowned the solar divinity of Apollo. Did the god avenge himself by making him feel among the ruins of his own temple how formidable his rays are to him that dares to brave them!"

M. Preller,* in many respects, may be considered as the continuer of Otfried Müller's method. In his view, also, the mystical element in the Greek religion belongs to the Thracians and the Pelasgians. The fundamental idea of the Pelasgic worship was the adoration of Nature regarded as living and divine, of the earth, and above all, of the divinities of the lower world. In contrast with the naturalism of the Pelasgians, M. Preller places the anthropomorphism of the Hellenes, represented by the Homeric age, which gave a definite foundation to the popular national theology; but when the torrent of that warlike epoch had passed by, in the age of Solon and Pisistratus, there was something like a reaction in favour of the old worships, which found expression in two forms, *Orphism* and the *Mysteries*, both rather modern, both mixed somewhat with charlatanism, both eagerly taken up later by the neo-platonists.

The distinction of epochs is thus the basis of M. Preller's studies: the gods have their chronology as well as their nationality. In general, antiquity soon tired of its symbols; a cultus rarely lasted more than a hundred years; fashion went a great way in devotion, as with us. Religion, being one of the living products of humanity, must be alive, that

* "Demeter and Persephone," Hamburg, 1837.

is to say, must change with it. In our churches, do the saints of oldest date and best temper, enjoy the most favour, receive the most vows and prayers? Greece allowed herself full license in this regard, and very often treated her gods, not according to their merit and their antiquity, but according to their youth and their beauty. The smallest god coming from a strange land, was sure of obtaining, in a little while, more vogue than those who had been longer domesticated among them. Thus the Cabires, shapeless dwarfs of Samothrace, were banished to their forges and their bellows. Almost all the Pelasgian divinities were subjected to affronts of this kind. Old Pan hardly gets a place in the retinue of Dionysus, a young god high in the fashion. Hermes, the great Pelasgic god, is reduced to keeping watch at street corners, and showing travellers the road, for money. Honest Vulcan, that conscientious workman, so useful, so laborious, ascends Olympus only to feel the weight of Jupiter's foot, the rebuffs of Venus. All these old gods of an industrious people—smith gods, farmer gods, shepherd gods, sad, serious, useful gods, little favoured by the graces—become demi-gods, satellites, or menials of the nobler deities. In general, the heroes represent the strange gods, who have not acquired rank among the national divinities, or divinities out of society, and just living on in the popular superstitions. Dethroned gods, indeed, were rarely without their compensation. The new worships did not destroy their predecessors, but cast them into the shade; oftener still assimilated them, becoming, as it were, vast crucibles, wherein the myths and the attributes of the older gods were melted, to be recast under new names. In this way the myths of Ceres and Proserpine absorbed nearly all the rest; in this way the Sabazian mysteries of Phrygia made their fortune by appropriating those of Bacchus.

It was particularly after the invasion of the Sabazian

mysteria, towards the first century before our era, that the Greeks manifested that singular curiosity in regard to strange rites, which St. Paul, like an excellent observer, gives as one of the traits of their character. The worships of Attis, of Cybele, of Adonis, with their fierce orgies, their clamours, their savage and licentious spirit, took by surprise the pure taste of Greece. There was one in particular, a dead god Zagreus, who suddenly made a prodigious fortune. It was Dionysus himself, the god always young, who was supposed to have been smitten in his flower, like Adonis, and who was honoured with bloody rites. Repelled with disgust by persons of intelligence and honesty, these worships were turned to profit by coarse charlatans, who imitated the shameful depravities of the Phrygian priests, ran through the streets and crossways, and made dupes of the credulous crowd. They remitted sins for money, trafficked in indulgences, made filters and cured maladies. "Next to the mendicants of the mother of the gods," says one of the interlocutors of the "Banquet" of Athenæus, "these, by Jupiter, are the most detestable brood I know."

Thus the oriental influence which M. Creuzer had so much exaggerated, is reduced to its just value. If we deduct original elements, this influence is not exercised till a comparatively modern date, and marks a degeneracy rather than an advance in the Hellenic religions. The barbaric element first glides in under the appearance and colour of the Greek myth. Later the foreign religions no longer take the trouble to change their dress. Isis, Serapis, Mithras, will occupy the throne in full view of Greece, wearing their strange garb, as if to prelude those monstrous amalgamations in which the superstitions of the East and those of the West, the excesses of religious sentiment and those of philosophic thought, astrology and magic, theurgy and neoplatonic ecstasy seemed to clasp hands.

All progress in mythological study, since M. Creuzer,

has confined itself as we see to the task of distinguishing the times, the places, and the races which the illustrious author of the "Symbolism" had too often confounded. M. Creuzer constructed the history of Paganism in the same way that the Old School constructed the history of Christianity, that is to say as if it had been a body of doctrines always the same, which passed through the centuries with no other changes than such as proceeded from external circumstances. Now, if modern criticism has taught us anything it is that, in the infinite variety of times and places, nothing is stable enough to be held thus fixedly under the eye, and that the history of the human mind, to be just, must offer a picture of incessant motion.

*Modern
Criticism*

III.

With so rich a range of study before him, M. Guigniaut's method was already traced. The wise academician might have added one system more to those which Germany had created; he chose to put himself outside of theories, and to confine himself to the more delicate task of discussion, not aiming at a mean refutation, but aspiring towards high impartiality and an intelligent reconciliation. In this, he but followed the course imposed on all serious minds in France in the 19th century. The character of the 19th century is critical. That systems were once useful and necessary; that a great development of important ideas is ordinarily produced only by the strife of rival schools, history stands by to prove, but the history of the human mind in our days establishes no less clearly, that the time for systems is gone by, the masters not having sufficient authority to found a school, nor the pupils sufficient docility to accept dictation. In this sense eclecticism is the method forced on our generation, and on France in particular.

The intellectual temperament of France is a mean betwixt opposite qualities, a compromise between extremes; it is lucid, simple, moderate. Let us not regret it; for it is after all, perhaps, the combination of mental faculties which is permitted to embrace most closely the truth. Schools are, in science, what parties are in politics; each is right in its turn, and it is impossible for an enlightened man to confine himself so exclusively in any one that he cannot perceive what may be reasonable in the others.

It is especially towards questions that relate to worship and the mysteries that M. Guigniaut has felt it necessary to direct the efforts of his criticism. These questions, in fact, are in one aspect more important than those which concern the myths. The purely mythological portion of the ancient religions had even with the ancients no dogmatic or definite character. The same myth is never presented by two authors in exactly the same way. Each reserved here the right of embroidering after his own fashion; and very early, the myths became mere themes of romance; which the artist cut and fitted to suit his taste. The mysteries, on the contrary, appear to have been the really serious part of the religions of antiquity. What were these mysteries round which the imagination, the spirit of system, and false learning took pleasure in gathering clouds? What were the Eleusinian mysteries in particular, on whose majesty and sacredness antiquity had but one voice?

No doubt on this subject can be entertained to-day; we can describe the different scenes of what Clement of Alexandria calls the "mystic drama of Eleusis" almost as well as one of the initiated. Let us first recal the fact, that the name "mystery" has been borrowed by the Church from pagan language, and let us not fear in explaining its original sense to have recourse to the use which the Church has made of it; let us not be afraid even of committing an anachronism by mentioning the "Mysteries" of the middle

ages. Let us represent to ourselves the primitive Christian mystery, the prototype of the Mass. What do we find in it? A grand symbolic act accompanied by significant ceremonies. Let us take the Christian worship at a more advanced epoch of its development, let us follow the ceremonies of holy week in a Mediæval Cathedral; what again do we find there? A mystic drama, rites commemorative of a historical fact, or what was so considered, alternations of joy and of grief continued many days, a complicated symbolism, an imitation of facts with a view to their recal, often even scenic representations more or less frank, in which the divine story is told sensibly to the eyes of the spectators.

Setting aside the immense superiority of the Christian dogma, setting aside the lofty moral spirit which pervades its legend, and to which nothing in antiquity can be compared, perhaps, if we could be permitted to assist at an ancient mystery, we should see the same things there; symbolical spectacles in which the mystagogue was actor and spectator at once; a group of representations traced on a pious fable, and almost always relating to the sojourn of a god on the earth, to his passion, his descent into hell, his return to life. Sometimes it was the death of Adonis, sometimes the mutilation of Attis, sometimes the murder of Tagreus or of Sabazius. One legend, in particular, contributed wonderfully to the commemorative representations; it was that of Ceres and Proserpine. All the circumstances of this myth, all the incidents of the search for Proserpine by her mother, gave room for a picturesque symbolism which powerfully captivated the imagination. They imitated the actions of the goddess, they revived the sentiments of joy or of grief, which must successively have animated her. There was first, a long procession mingled with burlesque scenes, purifications, watchings, fasts followed by festivals, night marches with torches, representing the mother's search, circuits in the dark, terrors,

anxieties, then all at once splendid illuminations. The gates of the temple opened, the actors were received into the realms of delight, where they heard voices. Changes of scene produced by theatrical machinery, added to the illusion; recitations, of which we have a sample in the Homeric hymn to Ceres, broke the monotony of the representations. Each day had its name, its exercises, its games, its stations, which the actors went through in company. One day it was a mimic battle in which they attacked each other with stones. Another day they paid homage to the mater dolorosa, probably a statue of Ceres as an addolorata, a veritable *Pietà*. Another day they drank the *Cycéon*; they imitated the jests, by which the old Iambe succeeded in amusing the goddess; they made processions to the spots in the neighbourhood of Eleusis, to the sacred fig-tree, to the ocean; they ate appointed meats; they practised mystic rites, whose significance was almost always lost on those who observed them. Mixed with these were bacchanalian ceremonies, dances, nocturnal feasts, with symbolical instruments. On their return they gave the reins to joy; the burlesque resumed its place in the *gephyrismes*, or *farces of the bridge*. As soon as the initiated had reached the bridge over the Cephissus, the inhabitants of the neighbouring places, running together from all quarters to see the procession, launched out into sarcasms on the holy troop, and licentious jokes to which they with equal freedom replied. To this, no doubt, were added scenes of grotesque comicality, a species of masquerade, whose influence on the first sketches of the dramatic art is very perceptible. Ceremonies which involved a symbolism so vague under a realism so gross, had a great charm for the ancients and left a profound impression; they combined what man loves most in works of imagination, a very definite form and a very free sense. Their popularity depended, in a great measure, on the manner in

which they were executed, and it was by a singular magnificence that the mysteries of Eleusis eclipsed all the others, and excited the envy of the whole world.

Such then were the mysteries. We cannot say that they were altogether mystical in the sense which M. Creuzer adopts, nor altogether void of sense as M. Lobeck will have it. We must not seek in them either a revelation from above, a high moral teaching, or a profound philosophy. The symbol was its own proper end. Can we believe that the women who celebrated the festivals of Adonis thought much of the mysterious sense of the actions they performed? Is everything explained when we have said that Adonis is the sun, traversing for six months the upper signs of the zodiac, and for six months the lower signs; that the boar which kills him is winter; that he himself, in another view, is the annual vegetation with its different periods of blooming time, of haying time, etc.? One may doubt whether these abstract considerations had any great charm for the Greek women. What then was it that made them run in crowds to weep for Adonis? The desire to bewail a beautiful youth untimely dead, to contemplate him as he lay on his funeral couch, exhausted, in the flower of his age, his head languidly drooping, surrounded with oranges and plants of forward growth, which they watched as they opened and died; to bury him with their hands, to cut off their hair on his tomb, to weep and rejoice by turns, to taste, in a word, every sensation of passing joy and of sad revulsion that was connected with the myth of Adonis.

Thus, far from the worship following always a mystic legend, received as dogma, it was often the myth which was subservient to the instincts of the multitude, and furnished a covering for them. Besides, it should be recollected that the word *faith* had no meaning previous to Christianity, and that in questions of religious symbolism it is almost a

matter of indifference to the people whether they comprehend it or not. The impression results from the whole, and not from an understanding of each detail. People follow with pleasure these dramas addressed to the eye, without troubling themselves with their metaphysical sense. Every part of them is significant, it is true, but not immediately. Among the peasants who attend a midnight mass, how many think of the mystery of the incarnation? "Aristotle," says Synesius, "is of opinion that the initiated learned nothing definite, but received impressions—were put in a certain frame of mind." The teaching of the mysteries, then, was a kind of indirect teaching, analogous to that which a simple man receives when he assists at the offices, without knowing Latin, and without penetrating the sense of all that he sees. It was like a sacrament acting by its own virtue, a pledge of salvation conferred by sensible signs and consecrated formulas. Baptism, in the earliest ages of the Church, although it was open to all, nevertheless preserved the characteristics of an initiation. For the rest, M. Lobeck has well shown that the conditions imposed upon the initiated were so vague and illusory that the mysteries had no longer either a privilege or a secret. They were a genuine medley. To be admitted to them it was enough to be an Athenian, or to have a sponsor at Athens. Later, the doors were thrown wide open, and all comers were initiated.

Without exaggerating the moral and philosophic side of the mysteries, of which, it must be confessed, very little was thought, without stopping either to consider what would have seemed trifling or flat to us in these practices, we cannot deny that they contributed powerfully to sustain the religious and moral tradition of mankind. "For a long time," says M. Guigniaut, "the mysteries pacified souls through those august ceremonies which, in the transparent history of the great goddesses of the initiation, revealed the destiny

of man, and rendered him, through purification, worthy to live under their empire and to share their immortality. It is certain that the mysteries of Eleusis, in particular, exerted a moral and religious influence; that they consoled the present life, taught in their way the life to come, promised rewards to the initiated, on certain conditions, not of purity and piety only, but also of justice, and if they did not likewise teach monotheism, which would have been a negation of paganism, at least approached it as nearly as paganism was permitted to do. They sustained, they cherished in the soul, by their very mystery, by the purified worship of nature, that sentiment of the infinite—of God, in short—which lay at the bottom of the popular credence, but which the Anthropomorphism of mythology tended incessantly to efface.

It is, however, by another title, I mean as having served as a transition from paganism to the holier religion which took its place, that the mysteries are specially worthy to fix the attention of the philosopher and the critic. Deep researches would show that nearly everything in Christianity that does not depend on the Gospel is mere baggage brought from the pagan mysteries into the hostile camp. The primitive Christian worship was nothing but a mystery. The whole interior police of the Church, the degrees of initiation, the command of silence—a crowd of phrases in the ecclesiastical language—have no other origin. The revolution which overthrew paganism seems, at first glance, a sharp, trenchant, absolute rupture with the past, and such, in fact, it was, if we consider only the dogmatic rigidity and the austere moral tone which characterized the new religion; but in respect of worship and outward observances, the change was effected by an insensible transition, and the popular faith saved its most familiar symbols from shipwreck. Christianity introduced, at first, so little change into the habits of private and social life, that with great numbers in the fourth and fifth century it remains uncer-

tain whether they were pagans or Christians; many seem even to have pursued an irresolute course between the two worships. On its side, art, which formed an essential part of the ancient religion, had to break with scarce one of its traditions. Primitive Christian art is really nothing but pagan art in its decay, or in its lower departments. The Good Shepherd of the catacombs in Rome, copied from the Aristeus or from the Apollo Nomios, which figure in the same posture on the pagan sarcophagi, still carries the flute of Pan, in the midst of the four half-naked Seasons. On the Christian tombs of the cemetery of St. Calixtus, Orpheus charms the animals. Elsewhere the Christ as Jupiter-Pluto, Mary as Proserpine, receive the souls which Mercury, wearing the broad-brimmed hat, and carrying in his hand the rod of the soul-guide, brings to them, in presence of the three Fates. Pegasus, symbol of the apotheosis, Psyche, symbol of the immortal soul, Heaven, personified by an old man, the river Jordan, Victory, figure on a host of Christian monuments. Who can see without emotion those Roman churches, built of the ruins of antique temples, as the centos of Proba Falconia, from the verses of Virgil? Thus humanity does: picking up old, broken, pulverized fragments, it builds a new edifice, full of originality; for it the spirit is everything; the materials are of small account.

We must, then, regard *mystery* as a great transformation which the religions of antiquity underwent at the moment when, the childish fancies of the first age being no longer able to meet the new needs of the conscience, the human mind desired a more dogmatical and a more serious religion. The primitive polytheism, vague, indecisive, given over to individual interpretation, no longer satisfied an epoch of reflection. Epicurean incredulity, on one side, made fine sport of these innocent divinities; on another side, religious sentiments more elevated and delicate broke forth, at the expense of the ancient simplicity. The aspi-

rations towards Monotheism and a religion of morality, aspirations of which Christianity was the loftiest expression, gained in every direction; paganism itself could not escape from them. I have but little admiration, I confess, of the attempt for which history has made Julian responsible. In proportion as the primitive mythology seems lovely and beautiful to me in its artlessness, does this neo-paganism, this religion of antiquarians and sophists, seem meaningless and flat. The sense of beauty which was the basis of the Hellenic religion seems to be lost. The monstrous gods of the Orient, conceived out of all proportion, take the place of the harmonious creations of Greece. A *Deus Magnus Pantheus*—a God occult and nameless, threatens to absorb everything. The worship ends in a bloody bull-slaughter; the religious sentiment takes refuge in the shambles. To appease jealous and angry gods recourse is had to blood. A profound terror seems to prompt all the vows which have been transmitted to us by the inscriptions. Amid all this it is an absolute impossibility to found a moral teaching nearly or remotely resembling the Christian sermon.

It is from contemplating the ancient religion just at this moment of decline, that people have in general so misconceived it. It must be confessed that, at the epoch of Constantine or of Julian, paganism was a very indifferent religion, and that all attempts to reform it ended in nothing satisfactory. Criticism, however, cannot adopt unreservedly the sentence passed on the old worship. If it substantially accepts the judgment, it cannot but protest against the unfairness of its motives. The polemic under which paganism succumbed, was clumsy, violent, dishonest, like all polemics. Strange fact! It resembles precisely the attack by which the eighteenth century thought to make an end of Christianity. No dogma would have held its own in face of such assaults. Read the "Persiflage" of Hermias, the

writings of Tatian and of Athenagoras against paganism: one fancies he hears Voltaire regaling his readers with the childishnesses of the Bible. Controversialists, generally thinking only of catching their adversary tripping, too often yield to the temptation of ridiculing the doctrine they are combating, that they may enjoy the advantage of discovering the absurdity which they themselves have invented: a convenient proceeding, for there is nothing that cannot be taken on the ridiculous side; but a dangerous proceeding, for it infallibly reacts on those who employ it! Some Fathers of the Church used it with frightful prodigality. Most of them, availing themselves of the system of Euhemerus, turned paganism badly interpreted into a weapon against paganism; they attacked manfully the fancy-born gods and triumphed in the easy conflict with shadows. Others embraced a system coarser still, the hypothesis of demonology: the gods were nothing better than demons; demons gave the oracles. "Devils," said Tertullian, "take the place of gods; they introduce themselves into the statues, breathe the incense, drink the victims' blood." Others again frankly striking hands with Lucretius and Epicurus, declared the myths to be naught but frivolous fables, invented to amuse, without aim and without meaning. It is remarkable, nevertheless, and this ingenious observation has not escaped M. Creuzer, that the Fathers who were born in the East, educated often in a respect for paganism, or in the schools of philosophy, preserved something of the delicate sentiment of Greece. This work of demolition by calumny and misrepresentation wounded them deeply, and they showed themselves almost as severe against Euhemerus, as the honest pagans themselves. Origen and St. Gregory of Nazianzen, for example, frequently betray a remarkable partiality for paganism, and anticipate on many points the more delicate views of modern criticism.

Certainly we may believe that many of the reproaches



heaped by the Fathers of the Church on paganism, and in particular on the mysteries, were not without foundation; but was it fair to take paganism thus, on its lowest plane only, in its popular acceptation? The loftiest religious ideas, in the hands of sensual people, degenerate of course into sensualism and superstition. It is as if one were to judge catholicism by what is before his eyes at Naples or at Loretto. The picture of the festivals in honour of Ceres and of Adonis, as we find it in Aristophanes and Theocritus, presents nothing really immoral, but only something light, and far enough from serious. Drunkenness is the gravest abuse singled out there; but whoever should see at certain hours a *pardon* in pious Brittany might well think also that the chief object of the meeting was to drink. The feasts of the Martyrs in the primitive Church, gave room for scenes quite as little edifying, against which the Fathers roused themselves energetically. As to the symbols adopted by paganism, and which to our eyes would be grossly obscene, we must say with M. Creuzer, "That which civilized man modestly hides and carefully withdraws from view, the natural man, simple and true, made in name and shape a religious symbol consecrated by the public worship. With that faith which puts God into nature, with the freer manners of the Southern people, above all of the Greeks, these distinctions of decent and indecent, of that which was worthy or unworthy of the divine majesty, could not be felt. Hence it comes that these people, with an innocence that had become as strange to the Romans of the empire, as to modern Europe, admitted into their religions those sacred legends which we find scandalous, those emblems which we accuse of obscenity." We must believe in fact, that such emblems suggested to the ancients ideas wholly different from those which they inspire in us, since they excited in them no sentiments but those of sanctity and religious awe. What more revolting

to our habits than an obscene landmark at each cross-way and at the corners of the roads? And yet so little did this shock the ancients, that we see Hipparchus causing moral sentences to be engraved on the Hermes for the edification of the passers-by.

Thus much it is necessary to say of the ridiculous element which was so conspicuous in the hellenic paganism. Religions having to represent in the completest manner all the aspects of the human mind, and the burlesque being one of the aspects under which we conceive life, the burlesque is an essential element in all religions. Look at the epochs and the countries that are eminently religious, the middle ages, Italy, Spain. What irreverence! What floods of fables about the Virgin, the Saints, God himself! Those who have closely examined the Italian worship know how faint the line is which separates the serious from the comic, and what an insensible border lies between devotion and pleasantry. We are astonished to see on the monuments of grave Etruria, the most dignified scenes turned into caricature; we do not understand how the people that condemned Socrates on a suspicion of impiety, could allow Aristophanes to give Bacchus a drubbing on the stage, and to transform Hercules into a scullion. The Southern people, more familiar with their gods than the thoughtful people of the North, feel the necessity, from time to time, of laughing with them. The free and easy manners of the Neapolitans towards their Saint Januarius have nothing in them that should surprise us. Eighteen hundred years ago, the inhabitants of Pompeii, when they wished to obtain anything from their gods, laid down the conditions in writing, and, to make the bargain efficient, threatened them with blows of the stick.

Monotheism has become so fundamental an element in our intellectual condition, that all our efforts to comprehend the polytheism of antiquity must be nearly useless. At a

certain stage of its development, the human mind necessarily becomes monotheistic; but this conception of divinity is very far from being equally found by the cradle of all the races. There are monotheistic as there are polytheistic races; and this difference is due to an original diversity in their way of looking on nature. In the Arabian or Semitic conception, nature is not alive. The desert is monotheistic. Sublime in its uniform immensity, it revealed the very first day the idea of the infinite, but not that thought of fruitful activity which a nature incessantly creative has inspired in the Indo-European mind. This is why Arabia has always been the bulwark of monotheism. Nature plays no part in the Semitic religions; they are all of the head, all metaphysical and psychological. The extreme simplicity of the Semitic mind—without compass, without diversity, without plastic arts, without philosophy, without mythology, without political life, without progress—has no cause but this: in monotheism there is no variety. Exclusively struck by the unity of government which prevails in the world, the Semites have seen in the development of things only the accomplishment of the will of a superior being. God is; God has made the heaven and the earth: behold their whole philosophy! Such is not the conception of that other race, destined to exhaust every phase of life, which, from India to Greece, from Greece to the extremities of the North and West, has made nature animate and divine, from the living statue of Homer to the living vessel of the Scandinavians. For this race, the distinction of God from the not-God has always remained fluctuating; engaged in the world, its gods must share the vicissitudes of the world; they had a history, a succession of generations, dynasties, wars. Jupiter is now the king of gods and of men; but his reign will not outlast that of Cronos. Prometheus chained has predicted that his art will be less powerful than that of Time, and that one day he must yield to necessity.

The religion of antiquity was, like the society of antiquity, based on exclusiveness; it was a religion for the freemen and the nation, not for the stranger or the slave. The first condition demanded for admission to the mysteries was a declaration that one was not a barbarian. Ancient Greece showed itself more exclusive still. There, each promontory, each rivulet, each village, each mountain, had its legend. The worship of the woman was not that of the man; the worship of the sailor was not that of the farmer; that of the farmer was not that of the soldier. Hercules and the Dioscuri, in order to share in the Eleusinian games, were obliged to get themselves adopted by the Athenians. Rome prepared the grand idea of *catholicity*: all the gods became common to all civilized peoples; but the barbarian and the slave were still smitten with religious incapacity; and it was a startling novelty when St. Paul dared to say, "There is no more Jew nor Greek, there is no more slave nor master, there is no more man nor woman, for all are one creature in Jesus Christ."

It would do violence to our most conservative ideas to overlook the progress here; but equality is always purchased dearly, and we can conceive how the conservative party of the fourth and fifth century, composed of men well bred and attached to traditions of the past, should repeat incessantly: "Oh! how happy were our fathers! Oh, how our fathers were favoured in their time!" The grand, liberal life of the fine epochs of antiquity became impossible the day—bless the day, though!—on which the slave was regarded as a religious being, capable of worth. The gods of Olympus were the freeman's gods alone; not a wrinkle on their brow; not a shade of sadness; human nature always taken at its noblest; no account made of suffering. Now those who suffer wish their gods to suffer with them, and for this reason, so long as there are sorrows in the world, Christianity will have its justification for

being. There is the secret of the divine paradox : Blessed are they that mourn.

Far from me be the thought of attempting here one of those parallels which compel us to be unjust to the past, if we would not do wrong to the present. Paganism, better understood—thanks to this vast accumulation of labours whereon France and Germany have so happily combined their efforts—ought to be in our hands neither a weapon wielded by the polemic, nor mere food offered to the curious. In an elevated mind the spectacle of such long aberrations awakens neither disdain nor pity, but the conviction of a great fact: humanity is religious, and the necessary form of all religion is symbolism. That the symbol, from its very nature, is insufficient, and is condemned to remain far below the idea that it represents; that the attempt to define the infinite and to exhibit it to the eye, implies an impossibility, is too clear to be worth saying. All expression is limitation, and the only language not unworthy of things divine is silence. But human nature does not resign itself to that. If thoughtful man, in presence of the mystery of the supreme existence, comes, in spite of himself, to propose this question: Would it not be better to let our figures go, and to give up the idea of expressing the ineffable? It is certain at least, that humanity, given over to its instincts, has not paused at such a scruple; it has preferred speaking of God imperfectly to not speaking of him at all; it has preferred tracing a fanciful picture of the divine world, to resisting the invincible charm that draws it towards the invisible realms.

Thus the immense labour, whose history we have tried to sketch, comes to a conclusion at once consoling and religious; for if man by a spontaneous effort aspires to seize the infinite cause, and insists on passing beyond nature, is it not a noble indication that, by his origin and his destiny, he transcends the narrow limit of finite things? In view

of these perpetual efforts to scale the heavens, we learn to honour human nature; we persuade ourselves that this nature is noble, and a thing to be proud of. Then, too, we reassure ourselves against the menaces of the future. It may be that all we love, all that in our eyes makes life beautiful, the liberal culture of the mind, science, exalted art, are destined to last but a generation; but religion will not die. It will be the eternal protest of the mind against the systematic or the brutal materialism which would fain imprison man in the lower region of common life. Civilization has its pauses—not religion. ✓

THE HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

IT is the property of great things that they can be surveyed from different points of view, and that they grow with the human mind, so that each man, according to his degree of culture, and each age, as it more or less deeply comprehends the past—finds, from different motives, something in them to admire. When the critics of antiquity and those of the 17th century, ask us to admire the beauties which they think they discover in Homer, the puerility of their æsthetics amazes us; we esteem Homer as much as they did, but for quite other reasons. When Bossuet and M. de Chateaubriand fancy that they admire the Bible, when they admire its errors and its nonsense,* learned Germany has a right to smile; nevertheless, the admiration of Herder and Ewald for the Bible is no less lively for being better grounded. The more we look at the world and the past just as they are, conventionalities and preconceived ideas aside, the more we shall find a true beauty in them; and in this sense we can say that knowledge is the first condition of genuine admiration. Jerusalem has come out more brilliant and beautiful from the labour of modern science, the aspect of which was so de-

* "To appreciate the beauties of the Vulgate," says M. de Maistre, "choose a friend who knows no Hebrew, and you will see how a syllable, a word, some light winged phrase, will make first-rate beauties dance before your eyes." (*Soirées de Saint-Petersburg*, vii. Con.) There now is a convenient and gentlemanly æsthetic! Would you feel the beauties of Homer, choose a friend who knows no Greek, and he will unveil to you in Mme. Dacier's translation, a thousand first-rate beauties which Homer never thought of.

structive; the pious recitals in which our infancy was cradled, have become noble truths, thanks to sound interpretation; and it is to us who see Israel in her real beauty, it is to us critics that it honestly belongs to say, "Our feet have stood in thy courts, O Jerusalem!"

If we contemplate the development of the Hebrew mind as a whole, we are struck with that high character of absolute perfection, which entitles its works to rank as classics in the same line with the productions of Greece, of Rome, and of the Latin races. Alone among all the peoples of the East, Israel has had the privilege of writing for the whole world. The poetry of the Vedas is certainly admirable, and yet this collection of the first songs of the race to which we belong will never—as expression of our religious sentiments—supersede the psalms which are products of a race so different from ours. The literatures of the East can, as a general thing, be read and appreciated only by the learned; the literature of the Hebrews, on the contrary, is the Bible, the book præeminently, the universal reading; millions of men know no other poetry. Doubtless, in accounting for this astonishing destiny, we must allow for the religious revolutions, which, especially since the 16th century, have caused the Hebrew books to be regarded as the source of all revelation; but, it may be asserted, if these books had not contained something profoundly universal, they would never have come to such a fortune. Proportion, measure, taste, were in the East the exclusive privilege of the Hebrew people. Israel, like Greece, had the faculty of perfectly disengaging its idea, of exhibiting it in a small and finished frame; thus it succeeded in giving to its thought and feeling, a form that was general, and acceptable to the whole race of man.

Thanks to this universal adoption, no history is more popular than that of Israel; and yet no history has waited longer to be understood. It is the fate of literatures which

become the basis of a religious belief, to contract the rigidity of the dogma, and to lose their real features by becoming a conventional symbolism to which people resort for arguments in all causes. From the history of the most unmonarchical people that ever existed, Bossuet draws a justification of the policy of Louis XIV.; another argues from it a theocracy; a third has succeeded in discovering republicanism. Germany, with that gift of historical insight which seems especially assigned to her for the study of primitive epochs, first perceived the truth, and treated the history of the Jewish people like any other, not following any preconceived theological views, but conforming to the critical and grammatical study of texts. The work of biblical exegesis, constructed stone by stone, with a marvellous regularity and an incomparable persistency of method, is unquestionably the masterpiece of German genius, and the most perfect model that can be proposed in other branches of philology. Already, many years before the reformation, Germany had made the knowledge of Hebrew a kind of special domain, of which it has not since been dispossessed. In the 17th and in the 18th century, criticism, arrested in France by the narrow theological spirit,* or misled by the obtuseness which characterized the historical school of Voltaire, made marvellous progress here, and after the generation of Michaelis, Eichhorn, Rosenmüller, de Wette, Winer, Gesenius, one might imagine that there was nothing more to do in the department of Hebraic studies.

M. Ewald, however, has proved, in these latter years, by numerous writings, and above all, by his fine "History of

* This restraint is the more to be regretted, as the 17th century had a superior man, Richard Simon, of the Oratoire, who, but for the obstacles thrown in his way, would have created a sound exegesis in France a generation earlier than Germany established it.

the People of Israel,"* that the duty of high criticism in this ever new field was far from being fully discharged. By the boldness of his views, his mental acuteness, his brilliant imagination, his wonderful feeling for the religious and poetic, M. Ewald has far surpassed all who before him applied themselves to the history and literature of the Hebrew people. Some spots, it is true, dim these rare merits; his delicacy of perception sometimes degenerates into subtlety; he does not always stop soon enough in the path of conjecture; the origin of the people of Israel, the patriarchal epoch, the primitive fables, are treated too arbitrarily by means of daring parallels with mythologies wholly foreign to the Hebrew spirit. The picture of the last ages of Jewish history, those which preceded and immediately prepared the way for Christianity, is also coloured here and there by M. Ewald's peculiar ideas on the subject of religion and philosophy, ideas whose singular originality, at all events, cannot be challenged, and in which the author thinks he can reconcile a sort of Christian fanaticism with the most openly avowed rationalism.† The best portion of M. Ewald's work is the account of the purely Hebraic period from Solomon to the Maccabees. The history of David and of Solomon; the part played by the prophets, the different religious revolutions of the epoch of the kings, the periods of the captivity, the character of the Hebrew poetry, and especially of the poetry of the psalms, are marvellous expositions, which in many points could be amended

* *History of the People of Israel*, 4 vols., 8vo., 2d Ed., Göttingen, 1854.

† The *Jahrbucher der biblischen Wissenschaft*, an annual Magazine, published by M. Ewald, and filled with his ideas represents most clearly the singular part he has taken in the political and religious questions of Germany. This part, in which the scholar and the historian mingle in the strangest way with the preacher and the sectary, would be inexplicable to one who did not remember the powerful impression made on M. Ewald's mind by the study of the prophets, an impression that peeps out naively in his writings and his behaviour.

possibly, but which in total effect and general conception are not to be surpassed. Why does the learned professor of Göttingen commit the fault of mixing with all these fine and brilliant sketches, with passages full of enthusiasm, a bitter polemic against persons whose opinions often differ by the merest shade from his own? Why, in particular, does M. Ewald feel obliged to depreciate a man like Gesenius, who in point of philosophic insight and æsthetic sentiment, is not in any degree comparable to himself, but who, as a philologist and a grammarian, has never been excelled? M. Ewald, so superior to his rival in poetical intelligence and mental elevation, had no need to deny to him these solid qualities, in order to shine himself in the first rank among the critics and the interpreters of our century.

I.

A preliminary inquiry presides over all the problems relating to the people of Israel; how were the documents that serve as the basis for the history of the Hebrews, and especially the five oldest portions of their annals, which we are in the habit of grouping together under the name of the Pentateuch, drawn up as a compilation? A theory presented to the last generation as a bold paradox, according to which the Pentateuch was formed by collecting historical fragments of diverse authorship, is now adopted by all the enlightened critics of Germany.* The distinction

* This assertion, opposed to ideas generally received in France, needs supports which cannot be furnished here, but which may be found in M. Ewald's work, and in Lengerke, *Kenaan* pref.; de Wette, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, § 150 seq.; Stæhelin, *Critical Investigations on the Pentateuch*, 1843; Tuch, *Commentary on Genesis*, Halle, 1838. In French, M. S. Munk's *Palestine* may be consulted (Paris, 1843, in Didot's collection *Univers pittoresque*), p. 132, &c. where the question is handled with nice critical judgment.

between the substance and the form, distinction so essential in all primitive literature, is especially important in the Hebraic literature, for none has been submitted to so many handlings. It may be affirmed, for example, that in the books of Exodus and Numbers, we have information altogether authentic and contemporaneous, on the condition and the acts of the Israelites, in the desert of the peninsula of Sinai. Must we conclude from this that the books of Exodus and Numbers, as we possess them, date from that epoch? Surely not. The definite reduction to form of the books which contain the ancient history of Israel, probably does not go back further than the eighth century before our era; by the side of ancient fragments, preserved almost word for word, there may be found more modern pieces to which very different principles of criticism must be applied.

The sagacious and learned philologists who, in Germany, have devoted themselves to the discussion of this curious problem, have very clearly seen latterly where they must seek an analogy for the laws that have presided over the successive transformations of the historical writings of the Hebrews; it is in the historiography of Arabia. When, in fact, we compare the different classes of Mussulman historians, we recognise that they all do little more than reproduce an identical ground-work, whose first edition appears in the "Chronicles" of Tabari. The work of Tabari is itself but a collection of traditions arranged in series without the least critical purpose, full of repetitions, of contradictions, of departures from the natural order of facts. In Ibn-al-Athir, who marks a more advanced stage of composition, the recital is continuous, the contradictions are removed, the narrator chooses once for all the tradition which appears to him the most probable and passes the others by in silence; more modern readings are inserted here and there; but at bottom it is all through the same history as in Tabari,

with some variations, and some mistakes too, when the second editor has not perfectly understood the text he had under his eye. Finally in Ibn Khaldoun, the edition has passed once more, if I may venture to say so, through the crucible. The author mingles his personal views with his recital; we see his opinions and the end he was pursuing peep through. It is an elaborate and finished history coloured by the prism of the author's ideas.

Hebrew historiography has passed through analogous stages. Deuteronomy presents to us the history at its last period, worked over with a rhetorical intention, the narrator proposing not merely to recount, but to edify. The four preceding books disclose visibly the seams of older fragments, set together in a connected text, but not assimilated. We may differ as to the division of the parts, as to the number and character of the successive editions, and it must be confessed that M. Ewald, in aiming at an unattainable exactness on all these points, has passed the limits which severe criticism should impose on itself; but we can no longer be in doubt in regard to the process which brought the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua to their final state. It is clear that a "Jehovistic" editor, that is one who in his narration used the name Jehovah, has given the last form to this grand historic work, taking for the basis of it an Elohist writing—a writing, that is, in which God is designated by the word Elohim—the essential parts of which may even now be reconstructed.* As to the opinion which ascribes the editing of the Pentateuch

* We ought to remark that this system, long accepted in Germany, has nothing in common with Dr. Donaldson's unhappy attempt at reinstating the *Jaschar*, one of the books cited in the oldest annals of Israel. It is surprising that such a work should in a recent article have been presented as the last word of German exegesis, seeing that it was composed by a doctor of the University of Cambridge, and is universally repudiated by German critics

to Moses, it is outside of criticism, and we have nothing to do with its discussion; moreover this opinion seems to be quite modern, and it is very certain that the ancient Hebrews never thought of regarding their legislator as a historian.* The stories of the old times appeared to them absolutely impersonal, they attached to them the name of no author.

Thus was formed the fundamental writing of the Hebrew annals, what M. Ewald calls the "Book of Beginnings," in train of which came, in successive groups, the annals of the Judges, of the Kings, of the times of the captivity as far as Alexander. No people can boast with confidence of possessing so complete a body of history or archives so regularly kept. In fact, the important thing to maintain is that the free manipulations of the form never seriously touched the substance, so that the fragments thus joined together, whether the contents of them be historical or legendary, have the value of original documents. The Pentateuch, according to all appearance, comprises information borrowed from the archives of people the neighbours of Israel; such are the recitals of the war of the Iranian Kings against the Kings of the Valley of Siddim, in which Abraham figures as a stranger—"Abraham the Hebrew who dwelt in the oak grove of Mambre the Amorite;"—the genealogies of the Edomites; the curious synchronism established between the foundation of Hebron, and that of Tanis in Egypt. The very first passages, devoted to the antediluvian periods, wholly mythological as they appear, are certainly documents which bring us nearest to the origin of the human race.

It is impossible to understand Israel well, unless we

* The opinion that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch seems hardly fixed prior to the Christian era. M. de Wette thinks it was not wholly received even at this epoch.

connect it with the group of peoples whereof it constitutes a part, I mean the Semitic race, of which it is the highest and purest branch. The substantial result of modern philology has been to show, in the history of civilization, the action of a double current, produced by two races profoundly distinct in manners, language, and spirit; on one side the Indo-European race, embracing the noble populations of India, Persia, Caucasia—the whole of Europe; on the other side, the race erroneously named the Semitic,* comprising the native populations of Western and Southern Asia from the Euphrates. To the Indo-European race belong nearly all the great movements in the history of the world, military, political, intellectual; to the Semitic race belong the movements in religion. The Indo-European race, distracted by the variety of the universe, never by itself arrived at monotheism. The Semitic race, on the contrary, guided by its firm and sure sight, instantly unmasked Divinity, and without reflection or reasoning attained the purest form of religion that humanity has known. Monotheism in the world has been the work of Semitic apostles, in this sense, that previous to and apart from the action of Judaism, of Christianity and of Islamism, the worship of the only and the supreme God never was clearly apprehended by the multitude. Now these three grand religious movements are three Semitic facts, three branches of the same trunk, three versions, unequally fine, of the same idea. From Jerusalem to Sinai, from Sinai to Mecca, the distance is but a few leagues.

When and how did the Semitic race arrive at this notion of the divine unity which the world has admitted on the faith of its teaching? I think it was by a primitive intui-

* This name designates here not the people described in Genesis as the progeny of Sem, but the people who speak or who spoke the languages wrongly called Semitic, namely, the Hebrews, the Phenicians, the Syrians, the Arabs, the Abyssinians.

tion and from its earliest days. Monotheism is not invented; India, which has thought with so much originality and depth, has not to this day arrived at it; the whole force of the Greek mind would not have sufficed to bring humanity back to it without the cöoperation of the Semitic peoples. So it may be affirmed that these would never have mastered the doctrine of the divine unity if they had not found it in the most imperious instincts of their mind and heart. The first religions of the Indo-European race appear to have been purely physical. They were vivid impressions, as of the wind in the trees or the reeds, of running waters, of the sea, which took a body in the imaginations of these childlike people. The Indo-European did not reach the point of separating himself from the world as quickly as the Semite did. For a long time, he adored his own sensations, and, up to the very moment when the Semitic religions initiated him into a more elevated idea of Divinity, his worship was but an echo of nature. The Semitic race, on the contrary, reached, evidently without an effort, the notion of the supreme God. This grand conquest was not achieved as the result of progress or of philosophic reflection; it was one of its first perceptions. Having much earlier detached its personality from the universe, it almost immediately inferred from that the third term, God, creator of the universe. In place of a nature animated and alive in all its parts, its mind—if I may venture to say so—pictured a nature, dry and unfruitful. What a gulf between this rigid and simple conception of a God isolated from the world and of a world fashioned like a vessel in the hands of a potter, and the Indo-European theogony, animating and deifying nature, regarding life as a struggle, the universe as a perpetual change, and in some sort transporting revolution and progress into the administration of God.

The intolerance of the Semitic people is a necessary con

~~sequence of their monotheism.~~ The Indo-European nations, before their conversion to Semitic, that is to Jewish, Christian, or Mussulman ideas, having never accepted their religion as absolute truth, but as a sort of family or caste inheritance, of necessity remained strangers to intolerance and to proselytism; it is only among these people therefore that we find liberty of thought, the spirit of investigation and of individual research. The Semites, on the other hand, aspiring to realize a worship independent of provinces and of countries, of course declared all religions bad that differed from their own. Thus intolerance is really a product of the Semitic race, and a portion of the legacy good and evil which it has bequeathed to the world. The extraordinary phenomenon of the Mussulman conquest was possible only in the bosom of a race incapable as that was of seizing diversities, and whose whole creed was summed up in a single phrase: God is God. The tolerance of the Indo-Europeans certainly proceeded from a more elevated sentiment of human destiny, and from a greater expansion of mind; but who will venture to say, that in revealing the divine unity, and in finally suppressing local religions, the Semitic race has not laid the foundation stone of the unity and the progress of humanity?

We understand now how this race, so eminently endowed for the creation and diffusion of religions, was destined in the paths of secular existence, not to pass mediocrity. A race, incomplete from its very simplicity, it has neither plastic arts, nor rational science, nor philosophy, nor political life, nor military organization. The Semitic race has never comprehended civilization in the sense which we attach to the word. We find in its bosom neither great organic empires nor public spirit, nothing that suggests the Greek city, nothing that suggests the absolute monarchy of Egypt, and of Persia. The questions of aristocracy, of democracy, of feudalism, which comprise the whole secret of

the history of the Indo-European peoples, have no meaning for the Semites. The Semitic nobility is wholly patriarchal; it does not date from a conquest, it has its source in the blood. As to the supreme power, the Jew, like the Arab, rigorously confines it to God. The military inferiority of the Semites results from this total incapacity for discipline and for organization. To raise armies, they were obliged to have recourse to mercenaries: David did so; so did the Phenicians, the Carthaginians, the Chalifs. Even the Musulman conquest was accomplished without organization and without tactics; the Chalif has nothing of the sovereign, nothing of the military chief; he is a vice-prophet. The most illustrious representative of the Semitic race in our day, Abd-el-kader, is a sage, a man of religious meditations and strong passions, but in no degree a soldier. Nor does history show to us any grand empire founded by Semitic peoples: Judaism, Christianity, Islamism,—behold their work—work always directed towards the same end, to simplify the human mind, to banish polytheism, to write at the head of the book of revelations that word, which has rendered to human thought such grand service in effacing the mythological and cosmogonic complications in which profane antiquity lost itself: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

II.

It is at about two thousand years before our era that the gaze of the historian stops and rests with some assurance on this predestined family. An emigration of wandering Semites, with which the name of Tharé, or Térach, is associated, quits the mountains of Armenia and journeys towards the south. We must suppose that for a long time there was in the mountains of the north, a centre of Mono-

theistic aristocracy which remained faithful to its patriarchal manners and its lofty worship. Even in leaving the sanctuary the emigrant tribes regarded themselves as bound to God by a special alliance and compact. Thus we see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob continuing in Canaan and in Egypt their noble calling of shepherds, rich, haughty, heads of large households, in possession of pure and simple religious ideas, passing through different civilizations without confounding themselves with them, and without accepting anything from them. Abraham, a distinctly historical and real person, conducts the emigration into Palestine. He was not the first of his race on that ground; for, independently of the Canaanites, he found there a Semitic and Monotheistic chief, like himself,—Melchisedech, with whom he entered into friendship. Still, Mesopotamia for a long time yet continued the centre of the Terachite family, and thither the aristocracy, faithful to the Semitic ideas in regard to purity of blood, sent, even to the time of their entry into Egypt, to seek wives for their sons.

The life of Israel at this epoch is that of an Arab douar, with his prodigious development of individuality and of poetry, but, on the other side, with his absolute want of political ideas and of refined intellectual culture. We hardly know what was the result of the earliest contact of the Israelitish tribe with Egypt and the Canaanites. The vehement antipathy to Canaan which breathes through the whole Hebrew history is not a reason for maintaining that no influence could have been exerted by Canaan on Israel. Did not the course taken by the Hebrews, in not recognizing the Canaanites as their brethren, lead them to except the Canaanites from the chosen race of Shem, in order to throw them back into the infidel family of Ham, in contradiction to the clear testimony of language?*

* The Phœnician language was almost pure Hebrew.

treds have nowhere been stronger than in the Jewish race, the most contemptuous and the most aristocratic of all. Without admitting, with some scholars, that the Hebrews and the Canaanites had, for a long period, a religion nearly identical, we must acknowledge that it was not till a comparatively modern period that the former reached that spirit of exclusion which characterizes the Mosaic institutions. Many traits of the Phenician religion are recognized in the ancient Hebrew worship. At the patriarchal epoch the descendants of Abraham are seen accepting as sacred the places and objects which the Canaanites so regarded,—trees, mountains, springs, betyles or *beth-el*, stones to which divine virtues were attributed.

Profound darkness hides from us the first religious movement of Israel, that of which Moses was the high-priest and the hero. Contrary as it would be to sound criticism to refer to those remote times the complicated organization which is described in the Pentateuch, an organization no traces of which are found at the epoch of the Judges, nor even at the period of David and Solomon, it would be equally rash to deny that Israel, on its departure from Egypt, was submitted to the action of a great religious organizer. The descendants of Abraham seem to have kept, in Egypt, all the originality of their Semitic genius in constant communication with the other Terachite tribes of Arabia Petræa. They were able, under the influence of a lively antipathy to Egyptian idolatry, to plan one of those monotheistic reactions so common among the Semitic peoples, and ordinarily so fruitful. Every religion is moved to flee from its cradle. The movement we speak of, which appears to have had its principal centre in the tribe of Levi, was followed by a sort of *hegyra*, or emigration, and by a heroic era, which, in the imagination of later ages, assumed the proportions of epic history. Sinai, the holy mountain of all the region in which the grand act

transpired, was the point about which the revelation clung. A sacred name of the Deity, including the idea of a most elevated Monotheism, two tables, on which were inscribed ten precepts of the higher morality, a few aphorisms, which formed, together with the ten precepts, the Law of Jehovah, some simple rites, suited to the life of a nomadic people,—such as the ark, the tabernacle, the passover,—were probably the essential elements of this earliest institution, which afterwards became complicated, while at the same time the character of its founder went on increasing in grandeur. M. Ewald most ingeniously proves* that the glory of Moses underwent a long eclipse in Israel; that his name was almost unknown under the Judges and during the first generations of the Kings, and that the old founder did not rise from his tomb with the extraordinary glory that circles his brow, till a century or two before the fall of the Kingdom of Juda.

Arab life in its full perfection; such, in effect, is the spectacle which Israel still presents to us during the whole period of the Judges, and previous to its organization as a monarchy. Tribes without other bonds than the remembrance of their fraternity and the predominance of one of their number; the simplest religion that ever existed; a poetry, vivid, young, startling, the echo of which has come even to us, in the wild and admirable Song of Deborah; no institution, save that of a temporary chief judge, or *suffetes*, and the power still less defined of the prophet or seer supposed to be in communication with Divinity; finally, the priesthood regarded so exclusively the privilege of the tribe of Levi, that individuals who relapsed into idolatry felt obliged as their pledge to take a Levite to serve their idol. Nothing yet designated Israel as a peculiar people. It may be that among the neighbouring tribes of Palestine there were then

* Vol. II., page 41, et seq.

hordes as advanced as they, and the singular episode of Balaam proves that prophecy, religion, and poetry had among the tribes the same organization as in Israel.

It is towards the time of Eli and Samuel, about 1100 years before the Christian era, that the seal of divine election is all at once set on Israel. It is the moment when the Israelite nation arrives at reflection, and from the condition of a tribe, poor, simple, ignorant of the idea of majesty, passes to the kingly estate, with a constituted power, aspiring to become hereditary. Up to this time Israel had lived in that patriarchal anarchy, excluding all regular government, and just tempered by the plighted adhesion of the members of the family, which is the habitual state of the Arab tribes. It became impossible to maintain such an order of things in presence of the developments which social life in the East took on. The people with loud cries demanded "a king such as other nations had." Everything, in fact, indicates to us that this revolution was made in imitation of the foreigner, perhaps of the Philistine or the Phœnician, and in opposition to the wishes of the conservative party, who represented it as a kind of infidelity towards Jehovah. The account of it that has come to us is evidently the work of an opponent.* Royalty is there presented in the worst light, and is disdainfully ranked beneath the ancient patriarchal forms. It is not impossible that the account is from the very hand of Samuel. The chapters of the book bearing his name, in which his political attitude is exhibited, have a character so personal that we are tempted to believe that he himself was their author. Certain it is that Samuel, taking away with one hand what he had given with the other, never abandoned a systematic teasing of the royalty he had inaugurated with repugnance, and as a concession to the urgency of the multitude. The

* 1 Sam., ch. viii.

royalty, untried and untraditional, was at first his sport. At length David, the man destined to meet so many opposite needs, and to knit together the history of the Hebrew people, by uniting in his person the priest, the prophet, and the king, appeared, and became the representative of Israel's ideal in poetry, religion, intellect, and government.

Strange contrasts, at first glance, strike him who tries to explain the character of David according to the purified ideas of morality that we fashion for ourselves. How was it that the man whom we find at different epochs in his stormy career alternately serving the stranger against his country, associated with brigands, stained with domestic crimes, cruel and vengeful to atrocity,—how was it that he has been able to pass in the tradition of Israel for a King after God's own heart, even though he were the admirable political and religious organizer, the author of those psalms in which the most delicate sentiments of the heart have found so fine an expression? How was it that the morals of a bandit could be united with real grandeur of soul, with piety the most exquisite, with poetry the most feeling? How could the man who sacrificed his most faithful servant to an adulterous caprice, persuade himself with entire good faith, that Jehovah was his special protector bound to give him success, and to avenge him on his adversaries, as if He existed for him alone? All these traits would be inexplicable if we did not bear in mind the Semitic character of which David in his good as in his bad qualities is the finished type? Essentially egotistical, the Semite hardly recognized an obligation to any but himself; to pursue his revenge, to claim what he believed to be his right, is a kind of duty in his eyes. Religion with him has a very loose connexion with daily morality. Hence these singular characteristics of the biblical history which provoke criticism, and in the face of which apology is as misplaced as censure. The deeds of a most unscrupulous

policy will not hinder Solomon from being acknowledged as the wisest of Kings. The odd mixture of sincerity and of mendacity, of religious exaltation and of egotism which strikes us in Mahomet, the readiness with which Mussulmans confess that in many cases the prophet obeyed passion rather than duty, can be explained only by the sort of laxity which renders the Orientals profoundly indifferent to the choice of means when they can persuade themselves that the end to be attained is the will of God. Our disinterested and, so to speak, abstract way of judging actions, is unknown to them.

It would be contrary to sound criticism therefore to discuss ill-naturedly like Bayle and the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist, or derisively after the manner of Voltaire, such acts in David's life as cannot be justified in good morality. His behaviour towards Saul is decidedly equivocal. After the death of Saul the throne belonged to his son Ishbosheth; all the tribes, with the exception of Judah, gathered about him; treason and assassination soon deliver David from this rival. Thanks to the favour of the priesthood and to the powerful military institutions which he seems to have borrowed from the Philistines with whom he had long resided, perhaps also by means of foreign mercenaries,* the new King carried out his ruling idea, the supremacy of the tribe of Judah, a royalty powerful, hereditary in his house, having its seat at Jerusalem. That future capital of the religious world had up to this time been simply a fortified borough; David made of it "a city whose houses touched each other." At his death, the old King had crushed all his adversaries, fulfilled all his projects, and could repeat proudly that war song of his

* This at any rate is the explanation given of the name *Cari* (*Carians?*) and *Crethi—Plethi* (*Cretans? Philistines?*) which David's body guards bore. The Carians followed the trade of hirelings in all the ancient world, and the Philistines, according to a very rational hypothesis, came from Crete.

youthful days which amazes us by its bold and brutal energy.

“Jehovah said to my master, ‘sit at my right hand till I make thine enemies a footstool for thee.’

“Jehovah will stretch from Zion the sceptre of thy power; rule in the midst of thine enemies.

“Thy people have flocked to thy call in the splendour of holy ornaments; the young men that surround thee are like dew that comes from the bosom of the morning.

“Jehovah has sworn it, and he will not repent, thou art priest for ever, after the fashion of Melchisedek;

“The Lord is at thy right hand; in the day of his wrath he crushes Kings.

“He will reign over the nations, he will fill every place with corpses; he will crush heads over a vast space.

“He will refresh himself on his way with the water of a torrent; by that he will lift up again his head.”

This profane royalty, opposed in many respects to the true destiny of Israel, was continued through the entire reign of Solomon. The throne of David, according to the rules of strict descent, belonged to Adonias. Solomon seized it through his father's partiality and an intrigue of the harem directed by his mother Bethsabee, who was always the favourite wife. The affair was decided by David's "strong men," a small band of mercenaries of the roughest stamp, who had been the sinews of the preceding reign. The will of David preponderated, so completely had he accustomed Israel to obey him. The wisest of Kings inaugurated his reign after the Oriental fashion, by causing Adonias and his party to be slaughtered. Adonias, had he won, would no doubt have dealt likewise with Solomon's party. However that may be, these disturbances of the heirship had grave consequences, and dealt at legitimacy in Israel a blow from which it never recovered.

If the idea of a conquering monarchy passed for a

moment through the brain of David accustomed to live with his men of war and the Philistines, it was an idea that could not be realized, and it was very soon abandoned. The Hebrew people were incapable of a grand military organization, and in fact under Solomon, all that great apparatus of war is turned to the maintenance of peace. The reign of Solomon remains the profane ideal of Israel. His alliances with the whole East, without regard to differences of religion, his superb seraglio, which contained as many as seven hundred queens and three hundred concubines, the order and beauty of the appointments of his palace, the industrial and commercial prosperity of his time, revived in the imagination that taste for well-being and for worldly delights to which Israel abandoned itself whenever the goad of suffering ceased to push it towards higher destinies. The Song of Songs is a charming expression of the gay, happy, delicately sensual life of Israel, at one of those moments when letting the divine thought slumber it gave itself up to pleasure. A profane literature, common in part to the neighbouring peoples of Palestine, superseded the sacred poetry of the psalmists and the seers. Solomon himself cultivated that worldly wisdom, strange almost to the worship of Jehovah, which is not much better than the art of achieving temporal success. Works are ascribed to him, and certain it is that he was a writer. Less a poet than his father, and not gifted as he was with a true sentiment of Israel's calling, he set himself to describing created things "from the cedar to the hyssop;"* then, if we may

* By this phrase M. Ewald understands a cosmography similar to that of the Arabian naturalist Kazwini, a description of all creatures beginning with the largest and ending with the smallest. I incline to the belief that the allusion is to moral lessons drawn from animals and plants analogous to those in Proverbs (ch. xxx) or to those of the *Physiologus* and of the *Bestiaires* so popular in the middle age. The idea of a descriptive knowledge of nature was unknown to the Semitic people prior to their contact with the Greek mind.

believe the legend, he fell into scepticism, a disgust for everything, and took refuge in a philosophy of despair; "vanity of vanities!— nothing new under the sun:— To increase knowledge is to increase trouble. I wished to search into all that passes under the heaven, and I have seen that it was only vexation of spirit."

We feel how far we are from the pure ideal of Israel. The calling of Israel was not philosophy, nor science, nor art (music excepted), nor industry, nor commerce. In opening these secular paths, Solomon in one sense caused his people to deviate from their peculiarly religious destiny. It would have been all over with the doctrine of the true God if such tendencies had prevailed. Christianity and the conversion of the world to monotheism being the essential work of Israel, to which the rest must be referred, whatever turned it aside from this superior end was but a frivolous and dangerous distraction in its history. Now, far from having advanced this grand work, we may say that Solomon did everything to embarrass it. Had he succeeded, Israel would have ceased to be the people of God and would have become a worldly nation, like Tyre and Sidon. The prophets under him had little influence. Drawn on by his relations with the most diverse people, and by the desire to please his Egyptian, Sidonian, Moabite wives, he reached a sort of tolerance for strange rites. While the successor of David was passing his time playing at riddles with Saba's infidel queen, there were seen on the Mount of Olives, altars to Moloch and to Astarte. What more inconsistent with the first duty of Israel? Guardian of an idea about which the world was to rally, changed to substitute in the human mind the worship of the supreme God for that of national divinities, Israel was bound to be intolerant, and to affirm boldly that all worships except that of Jehovah was false and worthless. The reign of Solomon, therefore, was in many respects a

break in the sacred career of Israel. The intellectual and commercial development that he inaugurated had no continuance. At the close of his life, the prophets whom he had reduced to silence got the upper hand again, and violently opposed him. His works, deemed profane, for the most part perished; his memory remained clouded, and the liberality of thought which he had temporarily introduced left in Israel but a vague and brilliant recollection.

We see exhibited here the grand law of the whole history of the Hebrew people, the struggle of two opposing necessities which seem almost to have drawn in contrary ways this intelligent and passionate race; on one side the expansion of mind, eager to understand the world, to imitate other people, to leave the narrow inclosure in which the Mosaic institutions confined Israel; on the other side the conservative thought, to which the salvation of the human race was attached. The prophets are the representatives of the exclusive tendency; the kings, of a sentiment more open to ideas from without. Prophecy much more accordant with the genius and the vocation of the Hebrew people must of necessity triumph, and hinder the secular royalty from ever taking earnest root in Israel.

It is important to remark that the authority of the prophets, so hostile to royalty, is hardly less so to the priesthood. The prophet* never comes from the tribe of Levi; he teaches not in the temple, but in the squares, in the streets and market-places; far from insisting on observances after the manner of the priest, he preaches pure worship,

* I am sorry to be obliged to use the word *prophet*, which dates back only to the Greek translators of the Bible, and might induce the belief that the prediction of future events was the essential function of these inspired men. It would be better, for the oldest periods, at least, to call them seers or to retain the Semitic name of *nabi*.

the emptiness of outward practices when not connected with the heart's adoration. The prophet holds his commission from God alone, and stands for the interests of the people against the kings and the priests, often in alliance with the kings. Hence, a species of power which has nothing analogous in the history of any people, a sort of inspired tribuneship devoted to the preservation of the old ideas and the old rights. It cannot be denied that the general policy of the prophets appears to us austere and opposed to progress; but it was the true policy of Israel. At first it sounds importunate, this voice, stern and monotonous, always predicting ruin, cursing the instincts which impelled the ancients towards the worship of nature. Often, in that long strife between the kings and the prophets, we are tempted to decide in favour of the kings. Samuel's opposition to Saul is commonly far from rational, and if the prophets sometimes address just warnings to David, when they would remind the great king of the moral law he was too prone to forget, it must be owned that frequently too their reproaches disclose a very simple-minded policy, as when, for example, they arraign as a capital crime the census ordered by David, and wish to make the calamities that followed look like a punishment for this, doubtless, unpopular measure. Many of the kings introduced as miscreants by the stern authors of the book of Kings and of Chronicles, were likely enough reasonable princes, tolerant advocates of necessary alliances with the foreigner, yielding to the exigencies of their time, and to a certain tendency towards luxury and industry. The prophets, full of the old Semitic spirit, ardent enemies of the plastic arts, furious image-breakers, hostile to everything that involved Israel in the world's movement, demanded that the kings should persecute the worships which departed from Monotheism, and reproved them for the judicious foreign alliances which they contracted, as if they were crimes. Never

was opposition more acrid, more violent, more anarchical; and, nevertheless, the opposition was substantially just. From the moment we start from this principle that Israel had but one duty, the preservation of Monotheism, the direction of its course belonged of right to the prophets. Israel could not rally humanity round one identical faith, except as it scrupulously put aside all foreign influence; the preservation of Monotheism demanded neither breadth nor variety of mind, but an inflexible tenacity.

III.

For a period of sixty years—ten centuries about, before the Christian era—David and Solomon represented the highest degree of glory and of temporal prosperity that the Hebrews ever attained. Henceforth, all their dreams of happiness will turn towards an ideal composed of David and of Solomon, towards a king powerful and pacific, who will reign from sea to sea, and to whom all kings will be tributary. At what moment did that fruitful thought, out of which the Messiah shall grow, make its appearance in Israel? Criticism is unable to tell. These ideas, pent up in the depth of a nation's consciousness, have no beginning; like all nature's fundamental works, they hide their origin in mysterious darkness. Was the idea of a world's empire born in Rome at a given moment? No! it was as old as Rome itself, and was in some sort sealed up in the first stone of the Capitol. In the same way the faith in a Messiah, vague, obscure, confused by eclipse and forgetfulness, reposes in the most ancient deposits of Israel.

The unfitness of the Hebrews for a grand political career discloses itself more and more. From the time of Rehoboam they are almost always in vassalage first under Egypt, then under Assyria, then under Persia, then under

the Greeks, finally under the Romans. A special cause hastened the ruin of their temporal power. The tribe of Juda, though it gained a preponderance through David's victory, never succeeded in stifling the individuality of the other tribes, and in founding the unity of the nation. The tribes of Northern Palestine grouped round that of Ephraim, longed to detach themselves, and endured, but impatiently, the religious dependence in which Jerusalem held them. The large outlays of Solomon, which weighed heavily on the provinces and only benefited the capital, completed the separation of the interests of North and South. Ephraim, with its Mount Gerizim, the rival of Sion, its holy city of Bethel, its numerous memorials of the patriarchal age, was undeniably the most considerable of the communities that struggled against the absorbing activity of Juda. The rivalry of these two principal families of the Israelites dates from the most remote epochs of their history. In the time of the judges, Ephraim, by the stay of the ark at Shilo, and by its territorial importance, really held the leadership of the nation. The idea of an Israelitish monarchy just missed at one moment of being realized by Ephraim.* After the death of Saul, we see this tribe collect about itself all the tribes of the North, oppose Ishbosheth, unsuccessfully, to David, the skilful and fortunate champion of the pretensions of Juda, finally, after the death of Solomon, make its secession tendencies triumph through the schism of the kingdom of Israel, and the advent of an Ephraimite dynasty. Among the overseers of the workmen whom Solomon employed in the construction of the terrace between Sion and Moria, he remarked a robust youth of Ephraim, whose intelligent air struck him, and to whom he gave an important office in his administration. This was the man destined to strike a mortal blow at the

* See the story of Abimelech's attempt (Judges, ch. ix.).

house of David. Jeroboam, in the lifetime even of Solomon, raised the standard of revolt; the financial embarrassments which followed the death of the great king, furnished him with an excellent occasion for completing a separation that had become inevitable.

It cannot be said that the division of the ten tribes was, in view of the general destiny of the Hebrew people, a serious misfortune. Reduced to a space twenty leagues long by fifteen wide, Juda, left to herself, is purified and exalted; her religious ideas are developed and woven closely together. The North, on the contrary, given over to brutal dynasties, and a prey to perpetual revolutions, was early reduced to naught; the religious tradition became feeble there. Harshly repulsed by the scornful Jews of Jerusalem, when, after the captivity, they wished to cooperate with them in rebuilding the temple, the Samaritans hardly did more than copy loosely the institutions of Juda. They took their revenge in Christianity. The Christ found most of his disciples in the provinces of the ancient Kingdom of the North, despised and with a bad name for orthodoxy; and in this sense it can be maintained that Samaria has played as important a part as Jerusalem in the grand work of Israel. This old fraction of the Hebrew people, which, if it has not had the brilliant destiny of Juda, has almost equalled it in perseverance and faith, is in our time on the eve of extinction, and offers to the world the singular spectacle of a religion at the point of death. Persecutions, misery, and the proselytism of the more active sects, above all the Protestant missions, menace its frail existence every instant. In 1820 the Samaritans were still in number about five hundred. Robinson, who visited Neapolis (the ancient Sichem) in 1838, found but one hundred and fifty. In an appeal which they addressed to the French government in 1842, they confess that they are reduced to forty families. Their old priest, Salome, son of Tobias, who corresponded

with Bishop Gregory and M. de Sacy, is still living; but it does not seem as if the knowledge of the language and the traditions of Samaria could survive him. At this day, when all the world are looking for somebody to protect in the East, who will think of these poor Samaritans?*

It is remarkable, however, that prophecy, in the Kingdom of the North, was at first an element of political disturbance still more serious than in the South, and rendered impossible there all law of hereditary succession, while at Jerusalem the prestige of the house of David and the undisputed privilege of the Levites maintained a sort of divine right for the succession to the throne and to the priesthood. Elias and his school represent this period of the prophetic omnipotence, making and unmaking dynasties, really governing in the name of kings who were under tutelage. The finest pages of M. Ewald's book are those in which he exhibits the character and deeds of Elias. This giant of the prophets, by his ascetic life, by the strange costume he wore, by his hidden retreat in the mountains, from which he issued like a supernatural being, only to bear his menace and straightway disappear,—contrasts strangely with the simpler traits of the old prophets and with the less ascetic school of the prophets of literature. A great revolution, in fact, worked itself rapidly out in the germ of prophecy. The prophets of the school of Elias and Elisha never wrote. To the ancient prophet, who was a man of action, succeeded the prophetic writer, who aimed at power through the beauty of language alone. These astonishing publicists enriched the Hebrew scriptures, embracing up to that time merely historical narrative, canticle, and parable, by a new style,—by a kind of political literature fed by the incidents

* See the little work of M. l'Abbé Barga, entitled *The Samaritans of Napok*. Paris; 1855.

of the day, and resembling nothing so much as the press and the tribune of modern times.

In proportion as the secular future of Israel seemed destroyed past recovery, its religious destinies went on increasing. The closing periods of the Kingdom of Juda present one of the most amazing religious movements in history. These are the earliest origins of Christianity. The ancient Hebrew religion, simple, severe, with no refined theology, is scarcely more than a negation. Towards the time we speak of, an exalted pietism, which led to the reforms of Ezechias, and, above all, of Josias, introduced new elements into Mosaism. The worship centres more and more in Jerusalem; prayer commences. The word "devotion," which had no equivalent in the ancient patriarchal religion, begins to have a meaning. New editions of the Mosaic code, conceived in the parenetic tone and kept in authority by certain pious artifices, gained circulation.* Songs composed by literary men and marked by a rhetorical style rekindle in souls the zeal for Mosaism. A loose manner, prolix, but full of unction, the type of which we find in the work of Jeremiah, characterizes these productions. It is needless to add that each outbreak of piety was accompanied by an outbreak of intolerance and persecution against all nonconformity with the purest Monotheism.

A profound modification, at the same time, appears in the modes of feeling; a spirit of sweetness, a delicate sentiment of compassion for the weak, kindness to the poor and the oppressed, shades of character unknown to antiquity, come to light from all sides. The prophecies of Jeremiah and of Deuteronomy are already, in this respect, Christian books. Love, charity are born into the world. At the same time the cherished idea of Israel, the expectation of a pattern

* See 2 Kings, ch. xxii, xxiii.

king, who would bring the reign of God into Jerusalem and fulfil the ancient oracles, assumed grand proportions. It was for a long time believed that this perfect king was on the point of coming; but when people saw Josias almost realize the ideal of the theocratic sovereign and then miserably perish, the hope was shaken. The very simple system on which the social edifice of Israel reposed, the compact between God and the nation, by virtue of which the nation, so long as it remained faithful to Jehovah, should be happy and triumphant—this system, I say, was inevitably exposed to the rudest disappointments. The prophets charged with the application of this strange principle must have had more than one struggle to sustain it against stubborn facts. Often the epochs of most vivid piety were the most unfortunate, and it may be said that the final catastrophe surprised Israel in the midst of a period of very great fervour. Hardened against deceptions, accustomed to hoping against hope, Israel appealed from the letter to the spirit. The idea of a spiritual Kingdom of God, and of a law written not on stone, but in the heart, came to it as the dawn of a new future.

While in the heart of Jerusalem people were agitating these delicate questions, on which the religious future of the world hung, in the East vast and mighty monarchies were establishing themselves, which might destroy the Kingdom of Juda without an effort. The Hebrews, with such simple ideas as they had on the subject of political and military organization, experienced a lively astonishment and terror when, for the first time, they found themselves face to face with this terrible array of force; with this impious and brutal materialism; with this despotism in which the king usurped the place of God. The prophets, blind in the senses, but clear-sighted in the spirit, ceased not to repel the only policy that could save Israel, to assault royalty, and to excite internal commotions by

their menaces and their puritanism.* On the ruins of Jerusalem we see them persisting in their obstinacy, and almost exulting in the disasters which fulfilled their predictions. Ordinary policy would condemn them and hold them responsible in great measure for the misfortunes of their country; but the religious function of the Jewish people must always be fatal to its political character. Israel was doomed to share the fate of people devoted to an idea, to march her martyrs through the disdains of the world, waiting for the world to come back as a suppliant and beg for a place in Jerusalem.

IV.

The captivity reached but a small number of the inhabitants of Palestine; but it smote the head of the nation and the whole class in whom resided the religious traditions, so that the entire soul of Judæa was transported to Babylon. Owing to this circumstance, the first productions of the Hebrew genius bloomed on the banks of the Euphrates—those touching psalms that reach the soul with their enchantment, and penetrate it with sadness and with hope; those incomparable prophetic odes which have been appended to the works of Isaiah.† There grew up thenceforth in Babylon, or rather in the small towns grouped about the great city, a second capital, as it were, of Judaism. They who reinstated in Judæa the ancient institutions and studies, men like Esdras and Nehemiah, come from there, and are indignant, on their arrival, at the ignorance and the corruption of language among their co-religionists in Pales-

* See, for example, Jeremiah, chap. xxxvi.

† Ch. xl-lxvi. The strongest proofs establish the fact that these fragments are not from Isaiah, but belong rather to the time of the captivity.

tine. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, Babylon will become again the principal centre of the intellectual culture of Israel. So that the continuation of the Jewish tradition has, we may say, been twice effected by that city through the two great catastrophes which, seven centuries apart, completely ruined Judaism at Jerusalem.

In the history of the human mind, I know no stranger spectacle than that which Babylon witnessed the sixth century before the Christian era. That little group of exiles, lost in a profane crowd, feeling at once its material feebleness and its intellectual superiority, seeing around it the brutal reign of power and of pride, rises and reaches the skies. From all those divine oracles still unaccomplished, from that pile of baffled hopes, from that struggle of faith and imagination with the realities of existence, was ultimately born the Messiah. In the presence of triumphant iniquity, Israel made its appeal to "the great day of the Lord" and resolutely dashed into the future.

What saw he there, that nameless prophet,* who at this decisive moment was the interpreter of Israel's thought? No dreams of the sick man, who at the height of his fever sees another world displayed before him, and another sun blaze, had ever such ecstasies. We can only indicate the burden of these divine hymns in which the illustrious unknown saluted the new Jerusalem:—"Rise, shine, O Jerusalem!"—"Voice that crieth in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make smooth his paths!"—"How beautiful on the mountains the feet of Him who announces salvation!"—"Skies shed your dew, and let the clouds pour down justice!"—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, who arriveth from Bosra, his garments red with blood?" Then, in a dark and mysterious vision, that sublime apotheosis of the *man of sorrows*, the first hymn to suffering that the

* The man whose writings were added to the collection of Isaiah's works.

world ever heard. Nowhere more brilliantly than in these pages of which we speak, shines the special gift of Israel, *faith*, the consciousness of its superiority surviving all its defeats; the certainty of the future, which gave to a handful of captives the boldness to affirm that the world one day would belong to them. "Lift your eyes, O Jerusalem, look around and see these multitudes that come and gather; sons are brought to thee from distant countries, daughters press to thy bosom; troops of camels, dromedaries from Midian and from Epha, swarm upon thee; here are some from Saba, bringing gold and silver and announcing the praises of Jehovah. The flocks of Cedar will run to thee; the rams of the Nabateans will voluntarily offer themselves for thy sacrifices. What are these that fly like clouds, like doves, towards their shelter? The isles of the sea are waiting; the ships of Tarsus are ready to bring thee children; strangers will offer to build thy walls; kings will make themselves thy servants; thy gates shall be open night and day to let in the chosen of the nations, and the princes brought to render thee homage. The sons of those that have humbled thee will come bending towards thee; those that despised thee will kiss the print of thy foot, and will call thee City of God, holy Zion of Israel. Thou shalt suck the milk of the nations, thou shalt draw milk from the breasts of kings. No more shall iniquities be heard of on the earth, nor disasters on thy borders; peace shall reign over thy walls; glory shall sit at thy gates. Thou shalt need neither sun to light thy days, nor moon to brighten thy nights; thy sun shall never set, thy moon shall never know decline; for Jehovah will be thine eternal illumination, and the days of thy grief shall be passed for ever."

From this moment Israel appears before us exclusively possessed by its religious idea. None of the profane distractions, by which it had, at moments, been hampered, will

trouble it henceforth ; no more doubt, no more revolt, no more temptation to idolatry ; Paganism inspires it now only with the bitter and haughty derision of the Book of Wisdom ; Judaism goes on gathering itself up and fortifying itself more and more. The liberty, the simplicity of the antique Hebrew genius, so unfamiliar with all theological and casuistical scruples, gives place to the pettinesses of rabbinism ; the scribe succeeds to the prophet ; a priesthood, strongly organized, stifles all secular life ; the Synagogue becomes what later the Church will be,—a sort of constituted authority against which all independent thought dashes itself in pieces. Pietism is developed, and produces a literature weak enough, as compared with the productions of the classic era, but still full of charm. Some tender and touching psalms—eternal nourishment of pious souls—and the pretty romances of Tobias and of Judith, belong to this period. Compare who will the honest Tobias with Job ; like him, smitten with unmerited woes ; a world divides them. Here, patience, virtue rewarded, sweet and consoling images ; there, revolt, obstinacy, dispute, and the proud feeling of the Arab, who says in his misfortune, “God is great,”—a feeling which has nothing in common with the wholly Christian virtue of resignation.

A great indifference to political life is the consequence of the strict and severe zeal that marks the times at which we have now arrived. Israel was not commissioned to teach the world liberty ; therefore, since the captivity we see it willingly accept a subordinate position, and turn to profit the advantages that this situation gives it, without seeming to suspect that it involved any shame. While Greece, with resources very little greater than those of Palestine, gained for liberty its first victory, Israel consented to be nothing but a province of the great king, and found itself well content. Here, it must be confessed, is the bad side of Jewish history. Jealous only of their reli-

gious liberty, the Jews, without much pain, submitted to regulations which showed any tolerance for their worship, and gave to every despotism servants all the more devoted as being restrained by no responsibility to the nation. The Chaldean Empire, it is true, was odious to them, and they hailed its ruin with shouts of joy, doubtless because that military and altogether profane empire had nothing that answered to their own nature. On the other hand, they accepted as a boon the rule of the Persians, whose religion was the least pagan of the pagan world, and by its seriousness, its tendency to monotheism, its horror of figurative representations, offered much that was analogous with the Mosaic worship. Cyrus was received by them as an envoy of Jehovah, and introduced with full privileges into the chosen family of the people of God.

It cannot be denied that the Persians showed themselves very liberal towards Israel. Zerobabel, whom they re-established at the head of the nation, was of the house of David, and it simply remained for the Jews to revive through him their national dynasty; but such was their political coldness, that after Zerobabel they allowed his line to drag on in obscurity, and recognised no power save that of the high priest, which became hereditary. Israel pursued its destiny with ever increasing speed; its history is no longer that of a state, but of a religion. It is the fate of the peoples that have an intellectual or religious mission to fulfil towards other nations, to buy this brilliant and perilous vocation at the price of their nationality. The Greek genius did not act powerfully on the world till an epoch when Greece had no longer a political part to play. It has been sufficiently shown that the first cause of the decline of Italy was the universal tendency of Italy; that *primato* which she, in fact, so long exercised, and which effected this result; that wishing to be mistress everywhere, she became nothing at home. Who knows that one day

French ideas will not fill the world, when France shall be no more? The nationalities which cling strongly to their soil, which have no desire to make their ideas prevail outside of themselves, are very persistent in their own domain, but they have little effect on the general movement of the world. To act on the world one must die to one's self. The people that makes itself the missionary of a religious thought has no other country henceforth than that thought; and it is in this sense that too much religion kills a people, and is inconsistent with a purely rational establishment. The Maccabees are admirable as heroes, but their heroism does not excite in us the same emotions that Greek and Roman patriotism does. Miltiades fights for others without an after-thought of theology or of credence; Judas Maccabeus fights for a faith, and not for a country; or, at least, country with him is subordinate to faith. So true is this, that after the captivity the soil of Palestine becomes almost a thing indifferent with the Jews. Their most flourishing, most enlightened, most pious communities are spread over the regions most remote from the East.

One last trial, however, awaited Israel, and perhaps the most dangerous of all. I mean the contagion of the Greek civilization, which, from the time of Alexander, swept over all Asia. The first duty of the Jewish people was isolation. This duty it was able to discharge without much difficulty in presence of Egypt, of Phenicia, of Assyria. Persia had exerted a very powerful influence over the cast of its imagination; but, thanks to a singular analogy of institutions and of genius, the free reception of this influence was not an infidelity. The temptation was much graver before the incomparable prestige which could not fail to bring under the influence of the Greek mind the noblest portions of the human race. Israel, at first, was very deeply tainted. The Jewish colonies established in Egypt allowed themselves to

be captivated by the seductions of Hellenism, broke communion with Jerusalem, and almost entirely deserted the family of Israel.* Palestine itself at first succumbed to the influence of the Seleucidæ; a race-course and gymnasia were seen at Jerusalem; a powerful party, which counted in its bosom nearly all the youth, favoured these novelties, and, fascinated by the splendour of the Greek institutions, already regarded with pity the worship and the austere customs of their ancestors. But once more, this time, the conservative spirit carried the day. Some stubborn old men and a family of heroes saved the traditions about which the world was soon to rally.

The measure of the danger is given us by that of the hate. Woe to them who tried to oppose the free development of the religious needs of humanity! The historical memories most readily sacrificed are those of sovereigns who, not knowing how to guess the future, or foolishly undertaking to arrest it, have become persecutors of religious movements which were destined to triumph. Such were Antiochus, Herod, Diocletian, Julian,—all great princes, in an earthly sense, whom the popular conscience has pitilessly damned. This Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name is irrevocably associated with that of Nero, was a humane,† enlightened prince, who doubtless wished only the progress of the civilization and the arts of Greece. The rude means that he employed were those which the Greeks and Romans put in use, everywhere and always, to break in the civilizations that differed from their own. Having resided long in Rome as a hostage, Antiochus returned to Syria, his head full of ideas of the Roman policy, and dreaming of

* It is remarkable that Philo and the Jews of Egypt have left no trace of themselves in the vast depository of doctrines which compose the Talmud. At this day the true Jews scarcely regard them as co-religionists.

† See the testimony of the Book of Maccabees even, I. ch. vi., verse ii.

an Eastern empire, founded, like that of Rome, on the mixing of nationalities, and the extinction of provincial varieties. Judea was the first obstacle he was to encounter in the execution of this project. The priesthood was at this moment greatly enfeebled. The high priest Jesus, who, following the fashion, adopted the name of Jason, forgot himself so far as to send an ambassador to the games of Hercules at Tyre; the temple was given over to pillage; for an instant Olympian Jupiter had his altar there, and bacchanals ran through the streets of Jerusalem. Then began that heroic resistance which gave to the religion its first martyrs. The priests and a large portion of the population of Jerusalem had yielded; but it was the peculiarity of the Jewish people, and the secret of their force, that they kept their faith, independent of the priest, by lodging it exclusively in the conscience of a small number of heads of families attached to very simple ideas, and governed by an invincible sense of their superiority. The destiny of humanity was staked on the firmness of a few families. In consequence of this firmness the Greek spirit was reduced to powerlessness in Palestine, and deprived of all cöoperation really helpful to the first genesis of Christianity.

An influence far more efficacious, because excited without violence and through the effect of the moral similarity of the two peoples, was that of Persia. Persia is the only country that exercised on the Jewish people a truly profound religious influence. One of the most important results of Oriental studies in these latter times has been to show the leading part which the institutions of the Avesta played in all Western Asia, during the ages which preceded and those which immediately followed the Christian Era. We must thank Persia for all these new elements which we find in Christianity as compared with Mosaism, —elements which a superficial examination had at first

referred to Greece. Babylon, which continued to be one of the principal centres of Judaism, was the theatre of this mingling, which was to have such grave consequences in the history of the human mind, and whose first consequences were, for the Jews, a more complicated theory of angels and demons; a spiritualism refined as compared with the old Hebrew realism; a taste for symbols which borders close on the cabala and gnosticism; ideas on the terrestrial manifestations of Divinity altogether strange to the Semitic peoples. The faith in immortality and in the resurrection of the body also takes more definite forms. The Hebrews had never reached very distinct ideas on this point. The immortality in which Israel believed more than any other people is that of a race and of its work—not that of the individual. At last the Messianic formulas become much more precise, and attach themselves to the belief that the end of the world is near, and is to be accompanied by a general renewal of all things.* A series of compositions, written under the form of Apocalyptic visions, and with reason regarded by M. Ewald as a sort of new birth of prophecy, such as the book of Daniel, of Henoch, the fourth book of Esdras, the Sibylline verses,† were the fruit of this new taste, which, as compared with the style of the poets of the noble epoch, represents a sort of romanticism. Their form alone considered, these are productions of an advanced decadence. Nevertheless, we find in them sometimes a singular vigour of thought. The

* See an excellent work on the origin and formation of apocalyptic beliefs among the Jews, recently published in M. Colani's *Revue de Theologie* (Oct., 1855) by M. Michel Nicolas, Professor in the Theological Faculty of Montauban. The demonstration of what I can here only indicate will be found there.

† There is no possible doubt of the comparatively modern date of the book of Daniel. See the special works of MM. Lengerke, Hitzig, Lücke, Ewald. A portion of the Sibylline verses is of Jewish origin.

book of Daniel, especially, may be regarded as the oldest attempt at a philosophy of history. The revolutions that overran the East, the cosmopolitan habits of the Jewish people, and above all the intuition of the future which this people always had, gave to it, in this respect, an immense advantage over Greece. While political history—I mean the history of the internal strifes of the city—has found in Greece and Italy its most excellent interpreters, Israel has the glory of being the first to contemplate humanity as a whole, to see in the succession of empires something else than a fortuitous succession, and to reduce to a formula the development of human affairs. Perfect or imperfect, as you please to think, this system of the philosophy of history is at least the one that has lived the longest. It has lasted from the period of the Maccabees almost to our own day. Saint Augustine, in “The City of God,” and Bossuet, in the “Universal History,” have added nothing essential to it.

A new fact in Israel marked the fertile age which preceded the birth of the Christ,—numerous sects were produced, evincing a refinement of theological pretensions till then unknown. At the same time practices of special devotion, towards which the ancient Hebrews were in no wise drawn, prevail, and, following the eternal law by which religions are always impelled to their development by incidental causes, wear away the ancient foundation. The synagogues, or places of religious assembling, of which no trace is found before the captivity, and the institution of which is but moderately in harmony with the Mosaic spirit, assume great importance, and everywhere multiply. The influence of Upper Asia makes itself felt more and more; but, open on the side of the East, Jerusalem remains closed on the side of Greece, and stubbornly repels all approach of the Western philosophy. One party, small in numbers, enlightened, and too reasonable to succeed,—the

Sadducees,—try hard to establish a kind of rational Mosaism. The unbelieving Herod causes the temple to be rebuilt in the Greek style, and opposes to fanaticism a policy wholly of the world, founded on the separation of church and state, and on the equal toleration of the different sects. These timid remedies were powerless against the mysterious malady which tormented Israel. The Pharisees carried it. Now, who were the Pharisees? The supporters of the genuine tradition; the sons of those who resisted during the captivity, who resisted under the Maccabees; the ancestors of the Talmudists, and of those who mounted the scaffolds in the middle age; the natural enemies of all who aspired to enlarge the bosom of Israel.

Thus, to the end, the grand law is maintained, which rules the history of Israel,—the struggle between the liberal and the conservative tendency; a struggle in which, happily for the world, the conservative tendency has always had the upper hand. He who studies this history by the light of our modern ideas, reflecting as they do the ideas of Greece and Rome, is shocked at every step. He must be for Saul against Samuel, for Ishbosheth against David, for the kings against the prophets, for the Samaritans against the Jews, for the Greek party against the Maccabees, for the Sadducees against the Pharisees; and yet, if Saul and Ishbosheth had prevailed Israel would have been only a small forgotten state of the East, something like Moab or Idumea. If the kings had succeeded in stifling prophecy, Israel might perhaps have reached, in secular affairs, the prosperity of Tyre or of Sidon; but its whole religious character would have been suppressed. If the Maccabees had not come forward to resist the Seleucidæ, Judæa would have been a country like Bithynia or Cappadocia, absorbed first by Greece, afterwards by Rome. Grant that they were narrow and retrogressive spirits,—those stubborn Jews of Modin,—spirits closed against all

idea of progress; not at all endowed with sentiment for art; incapable of comprehending anything of the brilliant civilization of Greece. It cannot be denied, either, that the Sadducees seem to us in many respects superior to the Pharisees. The whole history of Israel proves, by a striking example, that victory belongs not on the earth to those causes which seem most reasonable and most liberal; it belongs to those whom Jehovah has chosen to guide humanity towards the unknown lands promised by the divine oracles.

The moment had come when the large and the narrow thought were to join in their last battle, and when the two contrary tendencies which stirred in Israel were ready to end in a disruption. On one side, in fact, the Jewish nation had a mission essentially conservative; on the other, it boldly claimed the future. When this future is opened, it was easy to foresee that the synagogue would obey its eternal maxim: hope ever, and ever resist. Hence the false position of Israel in presence of Christianity, and the origin of that irreconcilable hate which eighteen centuries have hardly softened. The Christ came out of its bosom, and to remain faithful to its principle, Israel must crucify him. Christianity was its natural flower, and it must fling it away. Chased from its mother's lap, this child must grow up in spite of her, and march without her to the destinies that awaited him. St. Paul, with the energy of his wild genius, has described this situation,—the most extraordinary that the religious history of the world has presented.

Let us pause on the threshold of the mysterious event in which the whole life of Israel is summed up. Religions neither die nor abdicate, and Judaism, having brought forth its fruit, must continue through the ages its long and tenacious existence. Only, the spirit of life is henceforth gone from it; its history is fair and curious still; but it is the

history of a sect; it is no more, eminently, the history of religion. But if, finally, we put to ourselves this question, Has Israel fulfilled its calling?—has it, in the grand mingling of nations, kept the post that was originally intrusted to it?—we reply, without hesitation, Yes. Israel has been the stem on which the faith of the human race has been grafted. No people has taken its destiny so seriously as Israel; none has felt so vividly its joys and its sorrows as a nation; none has lived more thoroughly for an idea. Israel has vanquished time, and made use of all its oppressors. The day when a false report caused us to celebrate one year too soon the taking of Sebastopol, an old Polish Jew, who spends his days in the Imperial Library, absorbed in reading the dusty manuscripts of his nation, greeted me with this quotation from Isaiah: "It is fallen, it is fallen, Babylon." The victory of the allies, as he saw it, was but the chastisement for violences practised on his co-religionists by the man whom he called the Nebuchadnezzar and the Antiochus of our time. In that sad old man I seemed to see before me the living genius of that indestructible people. Over every ruin it has clapped its hands; persecuted by all men, on all men it has been avenged. For this it has needed but one quality, a quality, however, which man gives not to himself,—endurance. It is by this that it has brought to pass the boldest predictions of its prophets. The world that despised it has come round to it; Jerusalem at this present hour is truly "a house of prayer for all nations." Equally venerated by Jew, by Christian, by Mussulman, it is the holy city of four hundred millions of men, and the prophecy of Zechariah has come true to the letter: "At that time ten men shall cling to the skirt of one Jew, saying to him: We will go with thee, for we have heard it said that the Lord is with thee."

THE SHARE OF THE SEMITIC PEOPLE IN THE
HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION.

GENTLEMEN,—I am proud to ascend this chair—the most ancient in the College of France—made illustrious in the sixteenth century by eminent men, and in our own generation occupied by a scholar of the merit of M. Quatremère. In creating in the College of France an asylum for liberal science, King Francis I. laid down as the constitutional law of this grand foundation, the complete independence of criticism; the disinterested search for truth; impartial discussion, that knows no rules save those of good taste and sincerity. Precisely this, gentlemen, is the spirit which I would fain bring to the instruction here. I know the difficulties that are inseparable from the chair which I have the honour to occupy. It is the privilege and the peril of Semitic studies, that they touch on the most important problems in the history of mankind. The free mind knows no limits; but the human race at large is far from having reached that stage of serene contemplation in which it has no need of beholding God in this or that particular order of facts, for the very reason that it sees Him in everything. Liberty, gentlemen, had it been well understood, would have allowed these opposite claims to exist side by side. I hope that, by your favour, this course will prove that they can. As I shall bring to my instructions no dogmatism; as I shall confine myself always to appeals to your reason, to the statement of what I think most probable, leaving you full liberty of judgment, who can complain? Those only who

believe they have a monopoly of the truth ; but these must renounce the claim to be the masters of the world. In our day Galileo would not go down on his knees to retract what he knew to be the truth.

You will permit me, in the fulfilment of my task, to descend even to the smallest details, and to be habitually technical and austere. Science, gentlemen, reaches its holy end, which is the discovery of truth, only on the condition of being specific and rigorous. It is not every man's destiny to be a chemist, a naturalist, a philologist, to shut himself up in laboratories, to pursue for years an experiment or a calculation. All men, nevertheless, share in the great philosophical results of chemistry, physics, and philology. To present these results, disencumbered of the apparatus that has served to bring them out, is a useful labour, and one that science should not decline. Such, however, is not the purpose of the College of France. All the apparatus of the most special and minute science should be there displayed. Laborious demonstrations, patient analyses, not excluding, it is true, any general development, any legitimate digression—such is the programme of these courses. It is the very laboratory of philological science, which is open to the public in order that shape may be given to special vocations, and that people of the world may be able to form an idea of the methods that are employed in arriving at the truth.

To-day, gentlemen, I should depart from usage, and should disappoint your expectation, were I to begin with expositions of too technical a character. It would have given me pleasure to recall here the memory of the illustrious brother labourer whom I have the honour to succeed, —M. Etienne Quatremère. But this duty having been performed in this very place, and in a manner which forbids my recurring to it, I shall devote this first lecture to a colloquy with you on the general character of the

peoples whose language and literatures we shall study together; to the part which they have played in history; to the contribution which they have made to the common work of civilization.

The most important result at which historical and philological science has arrived in the last half century has been to show, in the general development of humanity, two elements, as it were, which, mingled in unequal proportions, have made the woof of the web of history. As early as the sixteenth century, and almost as early as the middle age, it was discovered that the Hebrews, the Phenicians, the Carthaginians, the Syrians, Babylon, from a certain period, at least, the Arabs, the Abyssinians, spoke languages wholly cognate. Eichhorn, in the last century, proposed to call these languages Semitic, and this name, inexact as it is, may as well be retained. In the first years of our century a discovery, otherwise important, was made. Thanks to the knowledge of Sanskrit, due to the English scholars in Calcutta, the philologists of Germany, M. Bopp in particular, laid down sure principles, by means of which it was demonstrated that the ancient idioms of Brahmanic India, the different dialects of Persia, the Armenian, many dialects of the Caucasus, the Greek and Latin languages, with their derivatives, the Slavic languages, the Germanic, the Celtic, formed a vast whole, radically distinct from the Semitic group, and this they called Indo-Germanic, or Indo-European.

The line of demarcation revealed by the comparative study of languages was soon fortified by the study of literatures, institutions, manners, religions. When one is capable of instituting delicate comparisons, he recognizes in the ancient literatures of India, of Greece, of Persia, of the Germanic nations, common genders, rooted in a profound spiritual identity. The literature of the Hebrews and that of the Arabs have likewise a close relation to each other; on

the contrary, they have the least possible relation with those I have just enumerated.

We should look in vain among the Semitic peoples for an epopee or a tragedy; we should seek in vain among the Indo-European nations for anything analogous to the "Kasida" of the Arabs, and that species of eloquence which distinguishes the Jewish prophets and the Koran. The same may be said of institutions. The Indo-European nations had at their origin an old system of law, the remnants of which are found again in the Brahmanas of India, in the formulas of the Latins, in the Celtic, Slavic, and Germanic customs. Patriarchal life among the Hebrews and among the Arabs was subjected, undoubtedly, to entirely different laws.

Finally, the comparison of religions has come in to throw decisive light upon this question. By the side of comparative philology there was founded, a few years ago, in Germany, a comparative mythology, which demonstrated that all the Indo-European nations had originally, with a similar language, a similar religion, of which each one, in departing from the common cradle, has carried away the scattered remnants. This religion is the worship of the powers and phenomena of Nature, tending by philosophical development to a species of pantheism. The religious developments of the Semitic races obeyed entirely different laws. Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, show a dogmatic, absolute, severely monotheistic spirit, which distinguishes them fundamentally from the Indo-European religions, or, as we call them, the Pagan beliefs.

Here, then, are two entirely distinct individualities, which, between them, fill up, in a manner, almost the whole field of history, and which are, as it were, the two poles of movement for the human race. I say almost the whole field of history; for outside of these two great individualities there are yet two or three which are already

traced clearly enough for science, and the action of which has been extensive. I set aside China, which constitutes a world apart, and the Tartar races, which have acted only as natural scourges to destroy the work of the others. Egypt has played a considerable part in the history of the world. Now, Egypt is neither Semitic nor Indo-European; nor is Babylon purely Semitic. There seems to have been in Babylon an original type of civilization analogous to that of Egypt. It may even be said, in general, that before the entrance of the Indo-European and the Semitic nations on the scene of history, the world held already very old civilizations, to which ours owe, if not moral, at least industrial elements, and a long experience of material life. But all this is still faintly outlined before the eyes of history; all this is, moreover, obscured by events, such as the mission of Moses, the invention of alphabetical writing, the conquests of Cyrus and of Alexander, the occupation of the world by Greek genius, Christianity, the Roman Empire, Islamism, the Germanic conquest, Charlemagne, the revival of learning, the Reformation, philosophy, the French Revolution, the conquest of the world by modern Europe. There is the great current of history, a current formed by the mingling of two rivers, compared with which all other confluents are but rivulets. Let us endeavour to distinguish in this complex whole, the share of each of these two great races, which, by their combined action, and most frequently by their antagonism, have produced the condition of the world of which we ourselves are the final results.

At the outset an explanation is necessary. In speaking of the mingling of the two races, I refer simply to the blending of ideas, or if I may venture to say so, a sort of historic collaboration. The Indo-European and the Semitic peoples are, even in our days, entirely distinct. I do not speak of the Jews, whose peculiar and wonderful historic

destiny has given them, as it were, an exceptional place in humanity ; and yet, if we except France, which has set up in the world the principle of a purely ideal civilization, discarding all notion of difference in races, the Jews almost everywhere form still a society by themselves. The Arab at least, and in a more general sense the Mussulman, are further removed from us to-day than they have ever been. The Mussulman (the Semitic mind is especially represented in our days by Islam) and the European are face to face like two beings of a different species, having nothing in common in their manner of thinking and feeling. But the march of humanity is advanced by the struggle of contrary tendencies, by a sort of polarization in virtue of which every idea has on earth its exclusive representatives. It is in the aggregate that all these contradictions harmonize, and that perfect peace results from the shock of elements apparently hostile.

So much granted, if we ask what the Semitic peoples have contributed to this organic and living whole which is called civilization, we shall find, in the first place, that, in polity, we owe them nothing at all. Political life is perhaps the most peculiar and native characteristic of the Indo-European nations. These nations are the only ones that have known liberty, that have reconciled the State with the independence of the individual. To be sure, they are far from having always equally well adjusted these two opposite necessities. But among them are never found those great unitary despotisms, crushing all individuality, reducing man to the condition of a kind of abstract nameless function, as is the case in Egypt, China, and the Mussulman and Tartar despotisms. Examine successively the small municipal republics of Greece and of Italy, the Germanic feudalisms, the grand centralized organizations of which Rome gave the first model, and whose ideal reappeared in the French Revolution, you find always a vigorous moral

element, a powerful idea of the public good, sacrifice for a general object. In Sparta, individuality was little protected; the petty democracies of Athens and of Italy in the Middle Ages were almost as ferocious as the most cruel tyrant; the Roman Empire became (in part, however, through the influence of the East) an intolerable despotism; feudalism in Germany resulted in regular brigandage; royalty in France under Louis XIV. almost reached the excesses of the dynasties of the Sassanidæ or the Mongols; the French Revolution, while establishing with incomparable energy the principle of unity in the State, often strongly compromised liberty. But swift reactions have always saved these nations from the consequences of their errors. Not so in the East. The East, especially the Semitic East, has known no medium between the utter anarchy of the nomadic Arabs, and bloody unmitigated despotism. The idea of the commonweal, of the public welfare, is totally wanting among these nations. Liberty, true and entire, such liberty as the Anglo-Saxon peoples have realized, and grand State organizations such as the Roman Empire and France have created, were equally unknown to them. The ancient Hebrews, the Arabs, have been or are at times the freest of men, but on condition of having the next day a chief who cuts off heads at his own good pleasure. And when this happens, no one complains of violated right: David seizes the sceptre by means of an energetic *condottiere* which does not hinder his being a very religious man, a king after God's own heart; Solomon ascends the throne and maintains himself there by measures such as Sultans in all ages have used, but this does not prevent his being called the wisest of Kings. When the prophets storm against royalty, it is not in the name of a political right, it is in the name of the theocracy. Theocracy, anarchy, despotism, such, gentlemen, is a summary of the Semitic polity; happily it is not ours. The political principle drawn from the *Holy Scrip-*

tures (very badly drawn, it is true) by Bossuet, is a detestable principle. In polity, as in poetry, religion, philosophy, the duty of the Indo-European nations is to seek after nice combinations, the harmony of opposite things, the complexity so totally unknown among the Semitic nations whose organization has always been of a disheartening and fatal simplicity.

In art and poetry, what do we owe to them? In art nothing. These tribes have but little of the artist; art comes entirely from Greece. In poetry, nevertheless, without being their tributaries, we have with them more than one bond of union. The Psalms have become in some respects one of our sources of poetry. Hebrew poetry has taken a place with us beside Greek poetry, not as having furnished a distinct order of poetry, but as constituting a poetic ideal, a sort of Olympus where in consequence of an accepted prestige everything is suffused with a halo of light. Milton, Lamartine, Lamennais would not exist, or at least would not exist as they are, but for the psalms. Here again, however, all the shades of expression, all the delicacy, all the depth is our work. The thing essentially poetic is the destiny of man; his melancholy moods, his restless search after causes, his just complaint to heaven. There was no necessity of going to strangers to learn this. The eternal school here is each man's soul.

In science and philosophy we are exclusively Greek. The investigation of causes, knowledge for knowledge's own sake, is a thing of which there is no trace previous to Greece, a thing that we have learned from her alone. Babylon possessed a science, but it had not that pre-eminently scientific principle, the absolute fixedness of natural law. Egypt had some knowledge of geometry, but it did not originate the "Elements" of Euclid. As for the old Semitic spirit, it is by its nature anti-philosophic, anti-scientific. In "Job," the investigation of causes is

represented as almost an impiety. In "Ecclesiastes," science is declared to be a vanity. The author, prematurely surfeited, boasts of having studied everything under the sun, and of having found nothing but vanity. Aristotle, who was almost his contemporary, and who might have said with more reason that he had exhausted the universe, never speaks of his weariness. The wisdom of the Semitic nations never got beyond parables and proverbs. We often hear of Arabian science and philosophy, and it is true that during one or two centuries in the Middle Ages, the Arabs were our masters, but only however until the discovery of the Greek originals. This Arabian science and philosophy were but a poor translation of Greek science and philosophy. As soon as authentic Greece arises, these miserable translations become useless, and it is not without reason that all the philologists of the Renaissance undertake a veritable crusade against them. Moreover, on close examination, we find that this Arabian science had nothing of the Arab in it. Its foundation is purely Greek; among those who originated it, there is not one real Semite, they were Spaniards and Persians writing in Arabic. The Jews of the Middle Ages acted also as simple interpreters of philosophy. The Jewish philosophy of that epoch is unmodified Arabic. One page of Roger Bacon contains more of the true scientific spirit than does all that second-hand science, worthy of respect, certainly, as a link of tradition, but destitute of all noble originality.

If we examine the question with reference to moral and social ideas, we shall find that the Semitic ethics are occasionally very lofty and very pure. The code attributed to Moses contains elevated ideas of right. The prophets are at times very eloquent tribunes. The moralists, Jesus son of Sirak, and Hillel, reach a surprising grandeur. Let us not forget, finally, that the ethics of the Gospel were first preached in a Semitic tongue. On the other hand,

the Semitic nature is in general hard, narrow, egotistical. This race possesses noble passions, complete self-devotions, matchless characters. But there is rarely that delicacy of moral sense which seems to be the especial endowment of the Germanic and Celtic races. Tender, profound, melancholy sentiments, those dreams of the Infinite in which all the faculties of the soul blend, that grand revelation of duty which alone gives a solid basis to our faith and our hopes, are the work of our race and of our climate. Here then the task is divided. The moral education of humanity is not the exclusive merit of any race. The reason is quite simple; morals are not taught any more than poetry; fine aphorisms do not make the honest man; each one finds goodness in the loftiness of his nature, in the immediate revelation of his heart.

In industrial pursuits, inventions, external civilization, we owe, certainly, much to the Semitic peoples. Our race, gentlemen, did not set out with a taste for comfort and for business. It was a moral, brave, warlike race, jealous of liberty and honour, loving nature, capable of sacrifice, preferring many things to life. Trade, the arts of industry, were practised for the first time on a grand scale by the Semitic tribes, or at least by those speaking a Semitic language, the Phenicians. In the middle ages also, the Arabs and the Jews were our instructors in commercial affairs. All European luxury, from ancient times till the seventeenth century, came from the East. I say luxury, and not art; the distance from one to the other is infinite; Greece, which in point of art was immensely superior to the rest of mankind, was not a country of luxury; there the magnificence of the great king's palace was spoken of with disdain, and were it permitted to us to see the house of Pericles, we should probably find it hardly habitable. I do not insist on this point, for it would be necessary to consider whether this Asiatic luxury, that of Babylon, for instance, is really

due to the Semites ; I doubt it, for my part. But one gift they have incontestably made us, a gift of the highest order, and one which ought to place the Phenicians, in the history of progress, almost by the side of the Hebrews and the Arabs, their brothers,—Writing. You know that the characters we use at this day are, through a thousand transformations, those that the Semites used first to express the sounds of their language. The Greek and Latin alphabets, from which all our European alphabets are derived, are nothing else than the Phenician alphabet. Phonetics, that bright device for expressing each articulate sound by a sign, and for reducing the articulate sounds to a small number (twenty-two), is a Semitic invention. But for them, we should perhaps be still dragging along painfully with hieroglyphics. In one sense we may say that the Phenicians, whose whole literature has so unfortunately disappeared, have thus laid down the essential condition of all vigorous and precise exercise of thought.

But I am eager, gentlemen, to come at the prime service which the Semitic race has rendered to the world ; its peculiar work, its providential mission, if I may so express myself ? We owe to the Semitic race neither political life, art, poetry, philosophy, nor science. What then do we owe to them ? We owe to them religion. The whole world, if we except India, China, Japan, and tribes altogether savage, has adopted the Semitic religions. The civilized world comprises only Jews, Christians, and Mussulmans. The Indo-European race in particular, excepting the Brahmanic family and the feeble relics of the Parsees, has gone over completely to the Semitic faiths. What has been the cause of this strange phenomenon ? How happens it that the nations who hold the supremacy of the world have renounced their own creed to adopt that of the people they have conquered ?

The primitive worship of the Indo-European race, gen-

tiemen, was charming and profound, like the imagination of the nations themselves. It was like an echo of nature, a sort of naturalistic hymn, in which the idea of one sole cause appears but occasionally and uncertainly. It was a child's religion, full of artlessness and poetry, but destined to crumble at the first demand of thought. Persia first effected its reform (that which is associated with the name of Zoroaster) under influences and at an epoch unknown to us. Greece, in the time of Pisistratus, was already dissatisfied with her religion, and was turning towards the East. In the Roman period, the old pagan worship had become utterly insufficient. It no longer addressed the imagination; it spoke feebly to the moral sense. The old myths on the forces of nature had become changed into fables, not unfrequently amusing and ingenious, but destitute of all religious value. It is precisely at this epoch that the civilized world finds itself face to face with the Jewish faith. Based upon the clear and simple dogma of the divine unity, discarding naturalism and pantheism by the marvellously terse phrase: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth," possessing a law, a book, the depository of grand moral precepts and of an elevated religious poetry, Judaism had an incontestable superiority, and it might have been foreseen then that some day the world would become Jewish, that is to say would forsake the old mythology for Monotheism. An extraordinary movement which took place at this epoch in the heart of Judaism itself decided the victory. By the side of its grand and incomparable qualities Judaism contained the principle of a narrow formalism, of an exclusive and scornful fanaticism; this was the Pharisaic spirit which became later the Talmudic spirit. Had Judaism been merely Phariseeism it would have had no future. But this race had within itself a truly remarkable religious activity. Like all the noble races, moreover, it combined contrary

elements; it knew how to react on itself, and to develop at need qualities the very opposite of its defects.

In the midst of the enormous ferment in which the Jewish nation was plunged under the last Asmoneans, there took place in Galilee the most wonderful moral event which history has ever recorded. A matchless man—so grand, that although here all must be judged from a purely scientific point of view, I would not gainsay those who, struck with the exceptional character of his work, call him God—effected a reform in Judaism, a reform so radical, so thorough, that it was in all respects a complete creation. Having reached a higher religious plane than ever man reached before, having attained the point of regarding himself in his relation to God, as a son to his father, devoted to his work with a total forgetfulness of all else, and a self-renunciation never so sublimely practised before, the victim at last of his idea, and deified by death, Jesus founded the eternal religion of humanity, the religion of the soul, stripped of everything sacerdotal, of creed, of external ceremonies, accessible to every race, superior to all castes, in a word absolute; “Woman, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but when the true worshippers shall worship him in spirit and in truth.” The vital centre was established to which humanity must for centuries refer its hopes, its consolations, its motives for well-doing. The most copious source of virtue that the sympathetic touch of a sublime conscience ever caused to well up in the heart of man was opened. The lofty thought of Jesus, hardly comprehended by his disciples, suffered many lapses. Christianity, notwithstanding, prevailed from the very first, and prevailed supremely over other existing religions. These religions, which pretended to no absolute value, which had no strong organizations, and which represented no moral idea, offered but feeble

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resistance. Some attempts which were made to reform them, in accordance with the new needs of humanity, and to introduce into them an earnest moral element—the effort of Julian, for instance—failed completely. The Empire, which saw justly its principle threatened by the birth of a new power, the Church, resisted at first energetically. It ended by adopting the faith it had opposed. All the nations that were under Greek and Latin influence became Christian; the Germanic and Slavic peoples came in a little later. Persia and India alone, of the Indo-European race, thanks to their very strong religious institutions, which are closely allied to their polity, preserved, though much modified, the ancient worship of their forefathers. The Brahmanic race, especially, rendered to the world a scientific service of the highest kind, by preserving, with a minute and touching excess of precaution, the oldest hymns of their faith, the Vedas.

But after this incomparable victory the religious fecundity of the Semitic race was not exhausted. Christianity, absorbed by Greek and Latin civilization, had become a Western institution. The East, its cradle, was precisely the land in which it encountered the most formidable obstacles. Arabia in particular, in the seventh century, could not make up its mind to become Christian. Hesitating between Judaism and Christianity, native superstitions and the remembrance of the old patriarchal faith, recoiling from the mythologic elements which the Indo-European race had introduced into the heart of Christianity, Arabia wished to return to the religion of Abraham; she founded Islamism. Islamism, in its turn, appeared immensely superior amidst the debased religions of Asia. With one breath it overturned Parsism, which had been vigorous enough, under the Sassanidæ, to triumph over Christianity, and reduce it to the condition of an insignificant sect. India, in its turn, saw, but without being con-

verted, the divine unity proclaimed victoriously in the midst of its obsolete pantheon. Islamism, in a word, won over to Monotheism almost all the heathen whom Christianity had not yet converted. It is finishing its mission in our days by the conquest of Africa, which is becoming, at this time, almost wholly Mussulman. With a few exceptions, of secondary importance, the world has been thus conquered entire by the monotheistic apostleship of the Semites.

Do we mean to say that the Indo-European nations, in adopting the Semitic dogma, have completely given up their own individuality? No, indeed. In adopting the Semitic religion, we have modified it profoundly. Christianity, as popularly understood, is, in reality, our work. Primitive Christianity, consisting essentially of the apocalyptic belief in a Kingdom of God which was about to come; Christianity, as it existed in the mind of a St. James, or of a Papias, was very different from our Christianity, encumbered with metaphysics by the Greek Fathers, and with scholasticism by the Middle Ages, and by the progress of modern times reduced to a teaching of morality and charity. The victory of Christianity was secured only when it broke completely its Jewish shell, when it became again what it had been in the lofty purpose of its founder, a creation released from the narrow trammels of the Semitic mind. This is so true, that the Jews and Mussulmans feel only aversion to this religion, the sister of their own, but which, in the hands of another race, has clothed itself with an exquisite poetry, with a delicious attire of romantic legends. Refined, sensitive, imaginative souls, such as the author of the "Imitation," the mystics of the Middle Ages, and the saints in general, professed a religion, which had, indeed, sprung from the Semitic genius, but had been transformed from its very foundation by the genius of modern nations, especially of

the Celts and Germans. That depth of sentimentalism, that species of religious languor of a Francis d'Assisi, of a Fra Angelico, were the precise opposite of the Semitic genius, which is essentially hard and dry.

As regards the future, gentlemen, I see in it more and more the triumph of the Indo-European genius. Since the sixteenth century an immense event, until then undecided, has been coming out with striking vigour. It is the definitive victory of Europe, the accomplishment of this old Semitic proverb: "Let God increase Japhet, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan (Cham?) be his servant."

Till that time the Semitic spirit had been master on its soil. The Mussulman East defeated the West; had better arms and a better political system; sent it riches, knowledge, civilization. Henceforward the parts are changed. European genius rises with peerless grandeur; Islamism, on the contrary, is slowly decomposing,—in our days it is falling in with a crash. At the present time, the essential condition of a diffused civilization is the destruction of the peculiarly Semitic element, the destruction of the theocratic power of Islamism; consequently the destruction of Islamism itself; for Islamism can exist only as an official religion; as soon as it shall be reduced to the state of a free, personal religion, it will perish. Islamism is not merely a state religion, as Catholicism was in France under Louis XIV.—as it still is in Spain. It is religion excluding the state; it is an organization the type of which, in Europe, the Pontifical States alone exhibited. There is the endless strife, the strife which will cease only when the last son of Ishmael shall have died of misery, or shall have been driven by terror into the depths of the desert. Islam completely negatives Europe; Islam is fanaticism, such as Spain under Philip II. and Italy under Pius V. have scarcely known; Islam is contempt for science, suppres

sion of civil society; it is the appalling simplicity of the Semitic spirit cramping the human intellect, closing it against every delicate thought, every fine feeling, every rational inquiry, to confront it with an eternal repetition: *God is God.*

The future, gentlemen, belongs then to Europe, and to Europe alone. Europe will conquer the world, and spread through it her religion, which is law, liberty, respect for man, the belief that there is something divine in the heart of humanity. In all departments progress for the Indo-European people will consist in departing farther and farther from the Semitic spirit. Our religion will become less and less Jewish; more and more will it reject all political organizations as connected with the affairs of the soul. It will become the religion of the heart, the innermost poetry of every soul. In ethics we shall cultivate a refinement unknown to the austere natures of the Old Alliance; we shall become more and more Christian. In polity we shall reconcile two things which the Semitic nations have always ignored—liberty and a strong state organization. From poetry we shall demand expression for that instinct of the infinite which is at once our joy and our torment,—at all events our greatness. From philosophy, instead of the *absolute* of the scholastics, we shall demand delicate studies on the general system of the universe. In everything we shall seek after fine distinctions, subtlety instead of dogmatism, the relative in place of the absolute. There is the future, as I anticipate it, if the future is to belong to progress. Shall we attain a clearer view of the destiny of man and his relations with the infinite? Shall we know more surely the law of the origin of beings, the nature of conscience, what is life and personality? Without relapsing into credulity, and still persisting in its path of positive philosophy, will the world recover its joy, its ardour, its hope, its deeper thoughts? Will existence become again

worth the possessing, and will the man who believes in duty find in duty his reward? This science to which we consecrate our life—will it render back to us what we sacrifice to it? I know not. But this is certain, that in seeking out truth by scientific methods we shall have done our duty. If truth be cheerless, we shall at least have the consolation of having honestly discovered it; we may say that we deserved to find it more consoling, still, we will bear this witness in our hearts, that we have been thoroughly sincere.

To tell the truth, I cannot dwell on such thoughts. History demonstrates that there is in human nature a transcendent instinct, that urges it towards a nobler aim. The development of man is inexplicable on the hypothesis that man is only a being with an already finished destiny, virtue only a refined egotism, religion but a chimera. Let us work on, then, gentlemen. Whatever the author of "Ecclesiastes" may say in a moment of discouragement, science is not "the meanest occupation that God has given to the sons of men." It is the best. If all be vanity, he who has consecrated his life to truth will be no more duped than others. If all the good and the true be real, and we are sure that they are, their seeker and lover will have unquestionably breathed the finest spirit.

We shall not meet again, gentlemen. At my next lecture I shall plunge into Hebraic philology, where the greater number of you will not follow me. But I pray those who are young, and to whom I may be allowed to offer a word of counsel, to favour me with their attention. The impulse which is in you, and which has shown itself more than once during this lecture in a manner so honourable to me, is praiseworthy in its principle and of good promise; but do not let it degenerate into frivolous activity. Direct your attention to solid studies; believe that the liberal thing *par excellence* is cultivation of mind, noble-

ness of heart, independence of judgment/ Prepare for our country generations ripe for all that makes the glory and the ornament of life. Beware of rash enthusiasms, and remember that liberty is won only by earnestness, respect for ourselves and others, devotion to the common weal, and to the special work that each of us in this world is called upon to establish or to continue.

THE CRITICAL HISTORIANS OF JESUS.

THEY say that Angelico of Fiesole never painted the heads of the Virgin or the Christ except on his knees; it would be well for criticism to imitate his example, and only after having adored them, to face the radiance of certain figures before which the ages have bent low. The first duty of the philosopher is to swell the grand chorus of humanity, in worship of the moral goodness and beauty exhibited in all noble characters and elevated symbols. The second, is the unwearied search for truth, and the firm conviction that if the sacrifice of the selfish instincts may be well pleasing to Divinity, it cannot be so with the sacrifice of the scientific instincts. The timid credulity, which, from fear of seeing the object of its faith disappear, gives a body to every image, is as contrary to the harmony and the good discipline of the human faculties, as the purely negative criticism which refuses to adore the ideal type because it has discovered that the ideal is not always conformed to the actual. It should be time it was understood that criticism, far from excluding respect or from implying, as timorous people suppose, the crime of high treason against God and man, includes, on the contrary, the purest act of worship. Least of all, can it be afraid of appearing irreverent when it seeks to unveil the true countenance of the sublime Master who said: "I am the Truth!"

So profound an instinct impels man to search for truth, at the price of his dearest beliefs; this instinct constitutes for noble natures so imperious a duty, that the criticism

of the beginnings of a religion is never the work of free thinkers, but of the most enlightened followers of the religion. The branch of Christianity which grows most vitally from the Bible is precisely that which has produced the rational interpretation of the biblical texts; the most daring labours on the history of the founders of Christianity have come from Christian theologians. When secular knowledge began to handle these difficult subjects, it had only to take up from its own point of view the labours which sacred learning undertook, and which theology alone, it must be said, had formerly the liberty of engaging in. If, in our day, the independent thinker hardly dares to touch such formidable problems, what must have been, in days past, the fate of the historian who, regardless of the faith of eighteen centuries, permitted himself to cite before his tribunal the man whose brow seems to us always surrounded with the halo of divinity? Not in its infancy can criticism think of an enterprise so audacious. The day when it laid its hand on this last sanctuary it did but finish a long series of assaults against received opinions, and plant its standard on a citadel, all whose advanced works it had already destroyed.

Study, in fact, the march of modern criticism since the Renaissance, you will see it following steadily the line of its inflexible progress, and filling one after another, by truer images of the past, the places occupied by the superstitions of rude science. A sadness seems to attend each one of the steps that have been taken in this destined road; but really there is not one of the gods dethroned by criticism who does not also receive from criticism a more legitimate title to adoration. The false Aristotle of the Arabs and of the commentators of the middle ages, is the first to fall under the blows of the hellenists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and to give place to the authentic and original Aristotle; then Plato, exalted momentarily—in

opposition to scholastic peripateticism, preached at Florence, as the Gospel—finds his genuine claim to glory in descending from the rank of revealer to that of philosopher: next, Homer, the idol of the old philology, one fine day disappears from his pedestal of three thousand years and recovers his natural beauty in becoming the impersonal expression of the genius of Greece: then primitive history; till then accepted with coarse literalism, comes to be the better comprehended as it is the more severely discussed. Brave march from the letter to the spirit, painful deciphering which substitutes for legend a reality a thousand times more beautiful; such is the law of modern criticism. Wolff has done more for the veritable glory of Homer than generations of blind admirers; and I have always been sorry not to see him standing in the fine picture of M. Ingres, among those to whom the Iliad and the Odyssey owe the better part of their immortality.

It was inevitable that criticism, in this passionate search for beginnings, should come across that collection of books, products more or less pure of the Hebrew genius, which from Genesis to Revelation; form, according to one's point of view, either the finest of sacred scriptures or the most curious of literatures. After so many admirable labours pursued for the better understanding of Greek, Latin, and even Oriental Antiquity, how could people help thinking of the Bible? How could they refuse to examine the most precious monument that remains to us, of the most interesting of all Antiquities? To stop the human mind on that descent, would have been a thing impossible. Nevertheless, as orthodoxy was still the law of the outward life and even of most consciences, they were believers who made the first essays in biblical criticism. Charming illusion which at least proves the good faith of those who took up this work, and still more the fatality which draws on the human mind, entangled in the paths of

rationalism, to a rupture with tradition which at first it repels.

I.

Criticism has two modes of attacking a marvellous narrative; for as to accepting it as it stands, it cannot think of it, since its essence is denial of the supernatural.* 1. It may admit the substance of the narrative, but explain it by taking into consideration the age, the persons who have transmitted it to us, and the forms adopted at such and such an epoch to express facts. 2. It may cast doubt on the narrative itself, and may account for its formation without conceding its historical value. On the first supposition the task is to explain the material of the history; the reality of the material is consequently assumed. On the second, without pronouncing on this reality, the phenomena of the narrative are analysed as simple psychological facts. It is regarded as a poem created in all its parts by tradition, and neither having nor requiring other cause than the instincts of man's spiritual nature. In biblical exegesis we call those who follow the first method *rationalists*, because, at the start, they oppose themselves alone to the supernaturalists, and we reserve for the partisans of the second the name of *mythologues*.†

of
Explan.

* An explanation of this word has become necessary, since writers have fallen into the habit of designating by the word "Supernatural" the ideal and moral element of life in opposition to the material and positive. In this sense, we cannot deny the supernatural without falling into a coarse sensualism, which is as far as anything can be from my thought; for I believe, on the contrary, that the intellectual and moral life alone has any worth, or any genuine reality. By "Supernatural" I mean here "miraculous," that is to say, the special interposition of Deity in the physical and psychological order of the world, deranging the course of events with a view to a particular government of humanity.

† It is necessary to state that the name *rationalist* is taken here in a

The first method of explanation, the exclusive use of which could not fail to lead to singularly narrow views, was the only one known to the ancients. Euhemerus has bequeathed his name to that method of interpreting myths which substitutes natural facts for marvellous traditions. Protestant exegesis was in its early stage pure Euhemerism. A man whose name does not occupy the place it merits in the history of the human mind, Eichhorn, was the first to apply to the Bible this system of interpretation. The progress of history and philosophy had brought him to the alternative of admitting the divine intervention in the primitive period of all nations or of denying it in all. With every ancient people he observed, the unexpected and uncomprehended was referred to Deity; the sages all lived in communication with superior beings. Outside of Hebrew history, no one was inclined to believe in the literal truth of such recitals. But clearly, added Eichhorn, reason demands that we should treat the Hebrews and the non-Hebrews in the same manner; so that either we must place all nations during their infancy under the action of higher beings, or we must believe in such action on none of them. To admit a primitive supernaturalism common to all nations, is to create a world of fables. It simply remains for us to conceive the ancient narrations according to the spirit of the time which has bequeathed them to us. Doubtless, if they were written with the precision of our age, we should be forced to see in them either a real intervention of Deity or a falsehood invented for the purpose of making men believe in such an intervention; but coming from an uncritical epoch, those

purely conventional sense, to designate the interpreters who first applied the Euhemerist criticism to the Bible. The true rationalists, in our view, are neither the exegetists who were first dignified by the title nor the mythologues, but those who apply or who shall apply to Jewish and to Christian history a criticism freed from all dogmatic prejudice.

simple documents express themselves without art, and in conformity with the opinions received at the period of their composition. To get at the truth, we have only to translate the language of the ancients into our own. So long as the human mind had not yet penetrated the real cause of physical phenomena, it derived everything from supernatural forces: high thoughts, noble resolutions, useful inventions, and above all vivid dreams came from a god. And it was not the people alone who embraced these facile explanations; superior men had on their part no doubt on this matter, and boasted with full conviction of relations with Deity.

Under the marvellous narratives of the Bible we must, therefore, said Eichhorn, look for natural and simple facts, expressed after the fashion of childish people. Thus, the smoke and flame of Sinai were nothing but a fire that Moses kindled on the mountain to excite the imagination of the people, coincident with which was a violent storm; the fiery column was a torch carried in front of the caravan; the shining aspect of the face of the law-giver was occasioned by his great heat; and he, who did not know its cause, saw in it, as did the people, something divine.

To have subjected the body of the Hebrew Scriptures to the same method of interpretation with the other productions of the human mind, was an immense step, however defective this mode of interpretation as yet was. Time was necessary to embolden men to subject to similar treatment the writings of the New Testament, composed at a period nearer to our own, and held in more peculiar veneration. Eichhorn, like all reformers, paused on the first step, and very timidly applied the rationalistic method to the evangelical facts. Scarcely did he venture to propose a natural sense for some few recitals in the history of the Apostles, such as the conversion of St. Paul, the miracle

of the Pentecost, the angelic apparitions. It was in 1800 that Dr. Paulus put out under full sail on this new sea, and laid the first basis for a critical history of Jesus. With great delicacy Paulus distinguished the actual fact in the narrative—the *objective* element—from the narrator's judgment of the fact—the *subjective* element. The fact is the substance that serves as a foundation for the recital—the judgment on the fact is the view which the spectator or the narrator takes of it, his own explanation of it,—in a word, the reflection of the fact in his mind. The Gospels, according to Paulus, are *histories*, written by credulous men, under the action of a vivid imagination. The evangelists are *historians* after the pattern of those artless witnesses who, in telling us the simplest incident, cannot help presenting us with additions out of their own head. To arrive at the truth, we must place ourselves at the point of view of the epoch, and separate the real facts from the embellishments which credulous faith and a taste for the marvellous have added to it. Paulus holds firmly to the historical verity of the narratives. He takes pains to introduce into the evangelical history a rigorous chain of dates and events; but these events have nothing about them that renders necessary a supernatural intervention. With him, Jesus is not the Son of God in the sense of the Church, but a wise and virtuous man; they are not miracles he wrought, but deeds, sometimes of kindness and philanthropy, sometimes of medical skill, sometimes of chance and good fortune.

A few examples will convey an idea of the prevailingly subtle and forced character of this often ingenious exegesis. We will take first the gospel narrative of the birth of John the Baptist. This recital contains two supernatural and consequently inadmissible incidents: the apparition of the angel and the sudden dumbness of Zachariah. The interpreters we are speaking of explain the apparition of the

angel by the usual laws of angelophany. With some it was a man who said to the father of John the Baptist what he attributed to a celestial messenger; with others, it was a flash that struck his imagination; with others, it was a dream; with others, an ecstasy or hallucination induced by the mental state in which he found himself, and by the religious function which he was discharging. His mind being excited by the dim light of the sanctuary, he thinks, as he prays, on the object of his most ardent wishes; he expects to be heard, and he is consequently disposed to see a sign in everything that may occur. The smoke of the incense, illuminated by the lamps, takes a shape; the priest fancies that he sees a celestial being, who terrifies him at first, but from whose mouth he very soon thinks he hears consoling promises. At the first faint suggestion of a doubt the scrupulous Zachariah regards himself as guilty of incredulity, and thinks he is reprimanded by the envoy of God. The dumbness admits of a double explanation: either a sudden apoplexy actually paralyses the tongue of Zachariah, which he considers a punishment for his doubts; or else, according to a Jewish superstition, he forbids himself the use of the speech which he accuses himself of having misused. All the features of the recital were thus accepted as real, but explained without miracle. The new interpreters did not for a moment think of asking if the narrative in question might not be a fiction, conceived in imitation of the occurrences which the Old Testament associates with the birth of all great men.

Again, for example, we will take the gospel story of the fast which Jesus prolonged for forty days. If we are to believe the rationalists, *forty* was a round number signifying many days; or perhaps the abstinence was not complete, and did not exclude herbs and roots. One of them remarks that Jesus is said to have eaten nothing, but not that he drank nothing. Now, he adds, we have seen an

enthusiast sustain himself forty-five days by water and tea, with no other nourishment.

The other marvellous facts in the life of Jesus were explained in a similar way. The heavenly light of the shepherds of Bethlehem was neither more nor less than a lantern which was flashed in their eyes. The star of the magians was a comet, and when it is said that the star went with them on their journey allusion must be made to the light that was carried before them through the night. When they tell of Jesus as walking on the sea they mean to say that he rejoined his disciples by swimming, or by walking along the shore. Another time he calmed the tempest by seizing the tiller with a firm hand. The multiplication of the loaves is explained by secret magazines, or by provisions which the auditors had in their pockets. The rich had too much, the poor had too little, or had none at all: Jesus, like a true philanthropist, advised them to make common stock of the viands, and there was enough for everybody. The angels of the resurrection were simply the white linen cloths, which the pious women took for celestial beings. The ascension likewise was reduced to the proportions of a natural fact, by the hypothesis of a mist, under cover of which Jesus adroitly vanished, and came safely to the other side of the mountain.

A very narrow exegesis this, to be sure—very little calculated to save the dignity of the character of Jesus; an exegesis made up of subtleties, founded on the mechanical use of a few incidents—ecstasy, lightning, storm, cloud, &c. An exegesis quite inconsistent, too, viewed in a theological light; for if the sacred biographers deserve no faith in respect to incidents, why hold so strongly to their veracity in respect to the substance of the recital? Errors of detail are no more compatible with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost than impostures are. The insufficiency of such a shabby method of interpretation was not long in making

itself felt. Eichhorn himself, the father of biblical Evehemism, recognized the necessity of a larger exegesis for some portions of the Old Testament books, and particularly for the traditions relating to the creation and the fall of man. After trying diverse natural explanations of these traditions, and maintaining, like a scrupulous theologian, that it would be unworthy of the Deity to allow the insertion of a mythical fragment in a revealed book, he confessed the childishness of similar attempts, and in the narrative just mentioned saw no more than the translation into mythus of this philosophical thought: the desire for a better state is the source of all the evil in the world.

II.

The so-called rationalistic interpretation may have satisfied the first bold desire of the human mind on its taking possession of a long forbidden domain; but experience could not but disclose very soon the inexcusable defects, the dryness, the coarseness of it. Never was better realized the ingenious allegory of the daughters of Minos, who were changed into bats for having seriously criticised the vulgar credences. There is as much simplicity and credulity, and much less poetry, in clumsily discussing a legend in its details, as in accepting it, once for all, as it is. We are right in treating as barbarians the scribes of the seventeenth century, who, in copying the lives of the Saints, admitted some miracles and rejected others as too hard to believe. It is clear that on this principle all should have been rejected, and to a mean criticism, which does violence to texts in order to be but half rational, we prefer, as a matter of taste, M. de Montalembert's method with Saint Elizabeth, where the fables are collected indiscriminately, so that it is sometimes doubtful whether the

author believes the whole or believes nothing. Here we are at least free to suppose that it was the author's deliberate intention not to seem nice, and the book thus composed preserves an incontestable value as a work of art. Such also was the fine and poetical manner of Plato; this is the secret of the inimitable charm which the half-believing, half-skeptical use of the popular myths gives to his philosophy.* But only the narrow mind will accept one portion of the miraculous recitals and reject the other. Nothing could be less philosophical than to allow something to the impossible, and to apply a literal criticism to recitals conceived outside of all reality.

The study of comparative mythology was productive of new ideas all over Germany. Heyne, Wolff, Niebuhr, and soon Otfried Müller unveiled Greek and Latin antiquity. India opened her treasures, furnishing inestimable documents, without which the history of the human mind would for ever have been incomplete. Heyne had announced this fine principle: "From the myths the whole history

* Phedrus—Tell me, Socrates, was it not somewhere hereabouts, on the banks of the Ilyssus, that Boreas carried off the young Orithyia? Soc.—So they say. . . . But tell me, pray, do you believe that fabulous adventure?—If I had doubts about it, like the scholars, I should not be greatly troubled. I might be ingenious, and say that the north wind made her fall from a neighbouring rock, when she was playing with Pharmaceus, and that this mode of death gave rise to the belief that she was ravished by Boreas. . . . For my part, my dear Phedrus, I find such explanations very subtle, but they demand, I confess, too much labour and nicety, and they put a man in a very false position; for he must then be content to explain in the same way the Hippocentaurs, afterwards the Chimera, and I see coming along Pegasus, the Gorgons, a numberless crowd of other monsters, some more hideous than others, who, if we attach no faith to them, and yet would bring them back to the realm of probability, demand an ingenuity almost as grotesque as they are themselves, and a great waste of time besides. I have no leisure for it; I therefore give up the study of these stories altogether, and keeping within the limits of the vulgar belief, I am occupied not with these useless things, but with myself.—*Works*, Cousin's Translation, Vol. vi., pp. 7-9.

and philosophy of the ancients is drawn."* Gabler, Bauer, Vater, De Wette, applied to sacred history the critical principles so delicately followed in profane history, and in 1802 Bauer issued a "Hebraic Mythology of the Old and the New Testament." The oldest history of all nations, said Bauer, is mythical. Why should the history of Moses be the sole exception, when a single glance at the books of the Bible proves that they contain legends similar to those of other nations? Here the new school gained an easy triumph; for where can we find mythological recitals more characteristic than those of the temptation of Eve, of Noah and the Ark, of Babel, etc.? In 1805 Wecklein, Professor of Theology at Münster, taught that the translation of Henoah and of Elias had no more ground in fact than that of Ganymede; that the apparition of the angel to Agar was of the same order as that of Apollo to Diomedes; that Jehovah succours Gideon and Samson as Jupiter succours the Trojans. The new explanation very soon became a complete theory. There were in the Bible myths, historical, philosophical, poetical, and before long the history of the Hebrews disclosed all the features of that primitive age in which the human mind, without calculation or artifice, endeavoured to express its ideas under cover of fable. What absurdity, said the critics of the new school to the rationalists, to curtail the marvellous element in the Pentateuch, for example, while it is perfectly plain that the writer, in a great many places, believed he was narrating miracles! It is claiming to understand his words better than he did himself. Such stories should not, therefore, be treated as historical; they are legendary and traditional. Tradition, says De Wette, has no discernment. Its tendency is not historical; it is

* On the general theory of the myth, see Otfried Müller's excellent work, "Introduction to a Scientific Mythology." Göttingen. 1825.

patriotic and poetic. The finer the stories are, the more honourable to the nation; the more marvellous, the better they are received; and if there remain here and there a gap, the imagination is quick to fill it up. Singular fact, understood only in Germany, this system was proposed by theologians as the only way of defending the Bible against the objections of its adversaries.

Just as the Euhemerist interpretation had been applied to the narratives of the Old Testament before it was directed to those of the New, so some time elapsed before the mythological Exegetists allowed themselves to touch the Saint of Saints. But the course of things was fatal. Bauer, without treating the Gospel as a mythical history from beginning to end, already found in it detached myths, and averred that the stories of the infancy of Jesus, for example, could not receive any other explanation. They came, said he, from the natural proneness to invent marvellous anecdotes about the youth of celebrated men—*anecdotes which find a ready credence in after times.* Besides, the Evangelists could not possibly have had historical documents touching these first years, since Jesus had not as yet excited attention. Almost all the interpreters admitted artlessly that the recitals of the Evangelists merited confidence only when they treated the last years of the life of Jesus, and the more timid confined themselves to the admission that the chapters of the infancy in Matthew and Luke were apocryphal interpolations. Thus, the mythological explanation, allowed at first on the threshold of the Old Testament, stood now on the threshold of the new; but it was sternly forbidden to go further.

These barriers were not slow in falling. The last incidents in the life of Jesus, especially the ascension, seemed to be stamped with the same character as those of the infancy, and apparently called for the same explanation. Thus the edifice was breached at both ends, and, to bor-

row one theologian's expression, the evangelical history was entered by the triumphal gate of the mythus, and the exit was by a similar portal; but, for the whole intermediate space, one must content himself with the crooked and painful path of the natural explanation.

The contentment was not of long duration. Gabler thought he saw myths in all the miraculous facts of the public life. In fact, said he, from the moment the idea of the myth was introduced into the Gospels, no line of separation could be longer traced, and from beginning to end, the myth penetrated by force into the very heart of the Evangelical history. Why stop at the baptism of Jesus, when that scene is itself described in a manner clearly legendary? And if the ascension be placed in the rank of myths, why not concede the same character to the resurrection, to the apparition of Gethsemane, etc? In this way, defying the limits which some would fain have imposed, the myth invaded the history of Jesus at all points.

After this victory, however, the mythological school presented numerous varieties. By the side of the mythical explanation many still admitted the Evhemerist explanation, or mingled the two in different proportions. The search for history in the Gospels was not abandoned. The wiser declared that it was hardly possible to distinguish what portion they should make over to fact, and what portion to symbol. Criticism, they said, has no instrument sharp enough to divide these two elements, one from the other; at most we reach a sort of probability, and can say: here there is more of historical reality; there the mythical and poetical predominate.

Germany never pauses on the road of speculation; it almost always goes beyond bounds in the application of its theories. To the eclectic mythologists succeeded the absolute mythologists who were eager to explain all the facts of the gospels as pure myths, and renounced the attempt to ex-

tract from them a historical residuum. Dr. David Frederic Strauss has made for himself a European reputation by presenting this system with a vast array of knowledge and of reasonings in his celebrated book, the "Life of Jesus."* "The ancient interpretation of the Church," he says in the preface to his first edition, "started with two suppositions: the first, that the Gospels contain history; the second, that this history is a supernatural history. Rationalism rejecting the second of these propositions, attached itself only the more strongly to the first, namely, that in these books history is to be found—but a natural history. Knowledge cannot thus stop half way; the other supposition must be dropped also; it must be ascertained if, and to what point, we are in the gospels on historic ground; that is the natural course of things; and, from this point of view, the appearance of a work like the present is not only justified, but is even a necessity."

In this, Strauss is plainly right. One must ignore totally the history of German theology who would heap, as has been done, on the name of a single man, the curses that recoil on all the intellectual labour which he sums up. To declaim against all these inevitable phenomena, to make their partialities and incompleteness an excuse for denying what legitimacy they have, is to attack the predestined laws of reason, the inevitable march of the human mind. Strauss is one of the rings of modern science. The *prolegomena* to Homer by Wolff led of necessity to the Life of Jesus. To be sure, the Homeric question since Wolff, like the evangelical question since Strauss, has made great progress; but the very errors into which these two great critics have fallen should be regarded as fruitful of good and as preparatory to the discovery of the truth.

* *Life of Jesus, or Critical Examination of his History*, by Dr. D. F. Strauss, trans. by M. E. Littré, 2d ed. 2 vols. Paris, 1853.

The English translation is in three volumes by Miss Evans, London, 1846. John Chapman.

Of all the thinkers of Germany Strauss is perhaps the least appreciated in France. Most people know him only through the abuse of his adversaries, and from the report that a visionary of that name had denied the existence of Christ, for it is in terms as absurd as these that the Life of Jesus has been summarily spoken of. On the other hand, those who regarded Strauss as a historian freed from all prejudice that was injurious to science, misunderstood his true character. Strauss—we must say it, surprising as this double assertion may sound—Strauss is at once a theologian (many think a timid theologian) and a philosopher of the school of Hegel.

Yes, it must never be forgotten, in reading the Life of Jesus, this book is a book of theology, a book of sacred exegesis, a book of the same order as those of Michaelis, Eichhorn, Paulus, who openly gave out that they did not leave the region of theology. We have not here the free and easy attractions of independent science, we have a system of hermeneutics which with pedantic stiffness opposes another system. In France where the line between theology and profane science is much more strongly marked, where each of these two orders of study lives by itself, without thought of the other, we cannot comprehend so singular a phenomenon. Voltaire, had he lived in Germany, would have been professor in a theological faculty. The celebrated Gesenius, the boldest of rationalists, at Halle some years ago explained the Hebrew literature amid the applause of more than eight hundred auditors, all future ministers of the holy gospel. Strauss himself has been a professor of theology, and might have officially taught his system in a sacred chair. Let us hear him express the scruples of his timid conscience, on this point. The author, he says in the preface to his first edition, "knows that the internal essence of the Christian belief is wholly independent of his critical researches. The supernatural

birth of the Christ, his miracles, his resurrection, and his ascension, remain eternal verities, whatever doubts may rest on the reality of these things viewed as historical facts. This assurance alone can give repose and dignity to our criticism, and distinguish it from the naturalistic explanations of the last generation; explanations which, proposing to overthrow religious truth and historical fact together, were necessarily smitten with a character of frivolity. * * * * Some, however, may feel wounded in their faith by researches of this nature. If this were the case with theologians, they would have in their science a remedy for similar wounds, which cannot be spared them so long as they are not willing to remain behind the development of our epoch. For the laity, the subject, it is true, is not adequately prepared. The present work therefore has been so framed as at least to indicate more than once to the less instructed, that it was not intended for their use, and if, by an imprudent curiosity, or an excess of anti-heretical zeal, they allow themselves to go on and read it, they must bear the penalty in their own conscience, as Schleiermacher said on a similar occasion; for they cannot escape the conviction that they do not understand that whereof they would affirm."

Strauss, who is put forward in France as a kind of Anti-Christ, is really then a theologian; let us add, at the risk of appearing paradoxical, that this theologian is a disciple of Hegel. The "Life of Jesus" is, at bottom, merely the philosophy of the chief of the contemporaneous German school applied to the evangelical narratives; the christology of the theologian is but a symbolical translation of the abstract theses of the philosopher. God is not an infinite Being, inaccessible, dwelling outside of the finite and above it; he penetrates it, in such a manner that finite nature, that is to say the world and the human mind, are nothing more than an alienation that he makes from himself, from which he again retires to withdraw into his

unity. Man has no actuality as a finite spirit; God on his part has no actuality as an infinite spirit shut up in his infinity. The true and actual existence of spirit is neither God in himself nor man in himself; it is the God-Man. The moment humanity is mature enough to take for its religion this truth, that God is man, and that man is by race divine, there must arise an individual who shall be known as the present God. This God-Man, including in one sole being the divine essence and the human personality really has the divine spirit for its father, and a human mother. Man, divine in essence, he is sinless and perfect; he rules nature, he works miracles, and still, through his humanity, he is dependent on nature, subject to suffering and to death. Opposed to men who are submitted to their finite nature, he must meet a violent death at the hand of sinners; but he can ascend from this abyss and resume the path that leads unto himself. The death of the God-Man being merely the ceasing of his alienation, is in fact an elevation and a return to God: consequently his death is necessarily followed by resurrection and ascension.

This theoretical Christ, one may readily surmise, is not the historical Christ, who bore the name of Jesus. The mind of humanity, and that alone, includes all the attributes of the hegelian Christ. There never existed an individual formed, by special privilege, of the divine and the human essence, ruling nature, working miracles, raised bodily from the dead; there never existed an individual more exclusively God than any who had existed before him, or who will exist after him. By no such process is the idea realized; it does not lavish all its wealth on a single specimen, to be miserly towards the rest. Is not the unity of the divine and of the human natures conceived as incarnated in humanity—real in an infinitely higher sense than if it were limited to an individual? Is not a continuous incarnation of God truer than an incar-

nation confined to a point of time? Lodged in an individual, the properties and functions of the Christ are inconsistent with each other; they are reconciled in the idea of the race. Humanity is the union of two natures—the God made man; that is to say, the infinite spirit, which has gone out of itself into the finite nature, and the finite spirit, which is conscious of its infinity. This is the child of the visible mother and the invisible father—of spirit and of nature. This it is that works miracles; for in the course of human history spirit more and more brings matter under subjection. This is sinless; for the march of its development is beyond reproach. Stain attaches to the individual; it never touches the race or its history. This it is that dies, revives, and ascends to heaven; for in rejecting the finite, which limits it as a spirit individual, national, and planetary, it blends with the infinite spirit.

And yet the hegelian Christology, in placing its ideal above the historical Jesus, endeavours to give the divine founder his due. At the head of every great performance of humanity are found individuals endowed with lofty faculties, who are usually designated as geniuses, but who, when religious creations are in question, deserve a holier name. Jesus was of this number. No man having had, and no man needing to have, a more vivid sense of his connection with his Heavenly Father, it will never be possible to surpass him in the matter of religion, whatever progress may be made in other branches of intellectual culture. Religious faith, no doubt, has perfected itself since his time, by becoming disengaged from many a superstition, and from belief in the supernatural; but this progress bears no comparison with the gigantic stride that Jesus caused humanity to take in the career of its religious development. Never did the unity of God and of man show itself in the past, never will it show itself in the future, with a power

capable of thus transfiguring a whole life. Setting aside, therefore, the notions of impeccability and of absolute perfection, which no actual person can satisfy, we conceive of the Christ, says Strauss, as the being in whose consciousness the unity of the divine and of the human was exhibited for the first time, with an energy that left but an infinitely small weight to opposing qualities; a being in this sense unique and peerless in the history of the world, although the religious idea acquired and promulgated by him has not, in its details, eluded the law of progressive development.

This is strange language, surely, to our ears, and calculated to satisfy neither the theologian nor the critic. The misapprehensions to which the work of Strauss has given rise may, to a certain point, be explained by defects in the author's method. There is no accusation—not even the ridiculous one sometimes brought, of denying the existence of the Christ—that, however destitute of serious foundation, may not find some pretext in the abstract tone of the “Life of Jesus.” Lacking all feeling for history and fact, Strauss never leaves the questions of myth and symbol. One would say that for him the primitive events of Christianity occurred outside of actual existence and of nature. Strauss saw clearly that the composition of the Gospels offered a large field for criticism, and that all the recitals of the Evangelists cannot be accepted as true; the contradictions of the four texts are sufficient proof of that. Would a historian conclude from this that the evangelical narratives answered to no reality? Surely not. But Strauss, swayed by his theological and philosophical ideas, exclusively preoccupied by the necessity of substituting one system of exegesis for another, makes no account of fine distinctions. The historical reality of some of the facts narrated by the Evangelists being doubtful, all realistic exegesis is compromised in his view, and he thinks it

necessary to replace it by a theory which, without being burdened with the same difficulties, may be applied with an inflexible rigour from one end of the sacred text to the other.

We perceive now why the book of Strauss, in spite of its somewhat exaggerated fame, has been laid aside, and has satisfied nobody. The historian finds it too void of facts; the critic finds it too uniform in its processes; the theologian finds it based on a theory subversive of Christianity. We say it boldly—no one exclusive system will have the glory of solving this difficult problem of the origin of Christianity. No unique method is competent to explain the complex phenomena of the human mind. All primitive histories and religious legends present the real and the ideal mingled in different proportions, and though India could shape in pure mythology poems of two hundred thousand stanzas, we shall hardly believe that Judæa could have done the same. The Jewish people, in fact, has always, in power of imagination, been inferior to the Indo-Europeans, and at the era of the Christ it was surrounded, and as it were penetrated, by the historical spirit. I persist in the belief that with the epochs and the countries which are not wholly mythological the marvellous is less often a pure creation of the human mind than a fanciful way of representing real facts. In the state of reflection we see things by the full light of reason; credulous ignorance, on the other hand, sees them by the radiance of the moon, rendered shapeless by the deceitful and uncertain gleam. Timid credulity in this twilight changes real objects into phantoms; but hallucination alone creates beings out of nothing, and with no external cause. In the same way the legends of countries half open to rational culture have been much oftener formed by dimness of perception, by vagueness of tradition, by magnified rumours, by lapse of time between the fact and the recital, by the desire to

glorify heroes, than by pure creation, as was the case with nearly the whole structure of the Indo-European mythologies; or, rather, all processes have contributed in infinitesimal proportions to the tissue of those wonderful embroideries, which put all scientific categories at fault, and at the formation of which the most wayward fancy has presided. It is not without many restrictions, therefore, that the word myth can be applied to the evangelical narratives. This word, which is perfectly applicable to India and primitive Greece, which is already incorrect as applied to the ancient traditions of the Hebrews and of the Semitic peoples in general, does not give the true colour of events in an epoch as advanced as that of Jesus was in the way of a certain kind of reflection.* For my part, I should prefer the words *legend* and *legendary narratives*, which, while they concede a large influence to the working of opinion, allow the action and the personal character of Jesus to stand out in their completeness.

It would be unjust to Strauss to pretend that he wished to explain everything by the myth, for by the side of the *pure myths* he recognizes *historical myths*, *legends*, *additions of scribes*, and gives detailed directions for distinguishing the historical from the fabulous!† Still the reaction against Euhemerism evidently carried him too far. The contradictions of the Evangelists touching the incidents of a narrative seem to him an objection to the historical truth of the narrative. Now there are facts, for which this divergence supposes a basis of reality. Such, for example, are the three denials of Saint Peter, told by the

* See, in the "Life of Jesus," the closing dissertation, and especially §§ cxlvii. and following, vol. ii., part 2d.

† This point has been fully developed by M. Colani in the "Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie Chrétienne," January and March, 1856 (Paris and Geneva). M. Colani's two articles form indisputably the best estimate that has been made of Strauss's book in France.

four Evangelists in different ways, but always characteristically.

A reproach not less grave, which touches Strauss's book in its very principle, is that it has underestimated the importance of the personal character of Jesus. On reading the book, it seems as if the religious revolution which bears the name of Christ had been accomplished without a Christ. It cannot be denied, indeed, that the process by which he explains the formation of nearly all Evangelical stories has a certain weight, and that some of the traits in the life of Jesus do owe their existence to reasoning like this:—the Messiah must be the son of David: now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore, Jesus is the son of David: therefore, there must be a genealogy to connect him with the royal line. The Messiah must be born in Bethlehem: now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore, there must be circumstances which make it necessary that he who spent nearly his whole life in Galilee, and probably had his birth there, should be born in Bethlehem. The Messianic ideal, in its main features, was traced over the life and character of the prophets and great men of the ancient law; it was therefore inevitable that the life of Jesus should reproduce, in many points, these consecrated patterns.* Thus the birth of Samuel, related at the beginning of the Book of Kings, and that of Samson, very similar,† became the model of all the births of illustrious men: a sterility long deplored, an angelic apparition or *annunciation*, some priestly spectacle, a psalm, then an infant dedicated to God and reserved for grand destinies; such was the outline sharply cut. Thence the whole recital, in the third Gospel, of the birth of John

* This explains the oft repeated phrase: *ἵνα πληρωθῇ ἡ γραφή*. Grammar has been needlessly tortured to prove that *ἵνα* in this phrase must be translated by "so that" (it was), instead of "in order that" (it might be). (See "Life of Jesus," by Kuhn, translated by M. Fr. Nettement, pp. 292, 294.

† See Judges, ch. xiii.

the Baptist; thence many of the incidents attending the birth of Jesus—among others, the canticle sung by Mary, evidently an imitation of Anne's; thence, finally, in the apocryphal Gospels, which tediously overdo this copying process, a complete scenic apparatus in similar style round the birth of Mary.* #

But to explain the whole evangelical legend by this single method is to estimate very imperfectly the wealth of the human mind. Frequently, reversing the process, it was the individual peculiarity of Jesus that modified the Messianic idea. Many of the features given as Messianic traits by the Evangelists, and by Saint Matthew especially, in the first and second chapters, for instance, far from belonging to an ideal accepted by the Jews, and clearly cut, are but artificial resemblances, simple ornaments of style, which find their explanation in the arbitrary way of quoting scripture which the Talmud and St. Paul so abundantly exemplify. In the case I allude to, an actual fact in the life of Jesus has induced the application of a biblical text where, till then, an allusion to the Messiah had never been dreamed of. When, for example, an incident of the Passion suggests to the evangelists the citation of the following verse of a psalm: "They have divided my vestments, and they have cast lots for my robe." Should we say that the wish to make out a fulfilment of prophecy had led to the invention of the incident? It was much more probably a real incident that led to the citation. At this distance, and deprived of historical monuments, we ought to abandon the attempt to distinguish nicely the reciprocal action and reaction, of the personal character of Jesus and of the

* See the "Gospel of the Nativity of the Holy Mary," ch. iii. This composition, more modern and elaborate, assigns the moral reason for the legend. It is "to show that the child born is a gift of God, and not the fruit of an unregulated passion." The name Anne, given to the mother of Mary, is, no doubt, a reminiscence of Anne, the mother of Samuel.

ideal portrait of him which was drawn before he came. Supposing even that everything was effected by the unceasing balancing of these two syllogisms: *The Messiah must do this: now Jesus is the Messiah: therefore Jesus did this:—Jesus did this; now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore the Messiah must do it:—*Syllogisms founded on the constant minor premiss; *Jesus is the Messiah*; we should no less have to explain this minor premiss. “No doubt,” says M. Colani very forcibly, “the apostles once believing in the Messianic character of Jesus, may have added to his actual image some lineaments borrowed from prophecy; but how came they to believe in his messianic character? Strauss has never explained this. What he leaves of the gospels is insufficient as ground for the apostles’ faith, and it is useless to ascribe to them a disposition to be content with the *minimum* of proof; the proofs must needs have been very strong to overcome the crushing doubts occasioned by the death on the cross. In other words, the person of Jesus must have singularly surpassed ordinary proportions, a large part of the evangelical narratives must be true.”

Much as the apologists who attribute to the first disciples of Jesus a degree of reflexion and rational discernment which did not belong to their time, are wanting in the essential principles of criticism, Strauss shows himself equally wanting as a philosophical historian when he omits to explain how Jesus, to the eyes of his contemporaries, came to realize sufficiently the messianic ideal. That this realization was not searchingly scrutinized, that many of the traits in which proof of the identity of Jesus with the Messiah was afterwards discovered, were not yet recognized as messianic traits, that the general credulity left an open field for wonderful statements and miraculous stories, we admit; but this is a result that could only proceed from the action of a powerful individuality; it is the advent of a new doctrine, the impulse it gave, the

spirit of sacrifice and of devotion it inspired. We venture to affirm that if France, better endowed than Germany with practical perception and less inclined to substitute in history, the action of ideas for the play of passion and the force of individual character, had undertaken to write scientifically the life of the Christ, it would have employed a more rigorous method; and avoiding the error of transferring the problem, as Strauss has done to the domain of abstract speculation, would have come much nearer the truth.

III.

The book of Strauss made an immense noise in Germany. Numerous adversaries, Protestant and Catholic, among whom are to be named Hug, Neander, Tholuck, Ullmann, stepped forward to defend the historical truth of the evangelical facts against the author of the "Life of Jesus."* All or nearly all tried to prove, on one side, that

* The history of this controversy has been well presented by M. Colani ("Revue de Theologie," March 1856). I can do no better than refer the reader to that. M. Colani felt no call to speak of the work of Dr. Sepp, partly translated by M. Ch. St. Foi (Paris 1854). This work, in fact, has very little scientific value, but it is interesting as making us acquainted with a kind of Christian cabbala which the German apologists have set up against the researches of rational criticism. Never was the superannuated system, which pretends to discover Christianity in all mythologies, pushed to wilder excesses. One fancies he is dreaming, when he sees a man, otherwise very spiritual, drawing calculations of the Messiah's coming from the pointing of the magnetic needle, and the laws of electricity, placing the seat of prophecy in the ganglionic system, seeking what he calls "the Year of God" in the mysteries of Indian, Chinese, Etruscan, Babylonian, chronologies, and saying gravely: "Chronology, taken altogether, is like a harp with many strings. As soon as we touch one, we hear the sympathetic tones resound in the chronological systems of other nations, as if a single hand had arranged them on the same key. . . . The mind which constructed this vast edifice of num-

the myth was impossible at the epoch when Christianity appeared; on the other side, that the labour necessary for the formation of the myth could not have been performed between the death of Jesus and the date of the composition of his history; thus, all dealt their blows at the really weak points in Strauss's book. The use of the word *myth* was open, as we have said, to grave objections. Moreover, Strauss's method of dealing with the age and the composition of the Gospels was always uncertain and defective. It is a capital point in his theory that our four Gospels cannot in their actual form be assigned to an earlier period than the end of the second century. The oldest witnesses of the second century say no more than that an apostle or an apostolic man wrote a gospel, but do not establish the fact that these primitive gospels were identical with those we now follow. We must, according to Strauss, admit that the legendary elements in the Life of Jesus remained in a fluid state about a century and a half, and did not begin to crystallize in great masses till the disciples of the eye-witnesses had themselves disappeared. It is easy to see what scope this interval furnishes to the mythological school, for the elaboration of a complete cycle of marvels.

The question of the precise age of the Gospels and their mode of composition is so delicate,* that I wish to avoid

bers, is the divine revelation whose remains have been preserved in the sacerdotal tradition of the several nations; unless we prefer to say that these instinctively learned the science furnished us by our whole solar system, and which reveals to us, in the spherical order of the planets, these prophetic numbers which point to the Messiah." Vol. ii. pp. 417, 473, etc. This M. Sepp calls mathematical and astronomical proof that would certainly convince the Jews, if they were not blind to the truth, that Jesus is the Messiah; and this is the book that has been offered as a mighty hammer under which rationalism crumbles to dust.

* The most recent work on this point is that of M. Ewald, in the "Jahrbücher der Biblischen Wissenschaft," 1850-54. See also the remarks of M. Bunsen, "Hippolytus and his Age," i., pp. 35, 48, and 199, edit. 2d. We

treating of it here. Let it suffice for me to say, that the more I have reflected on it the more I have been led to believe that the four texts received as canonical bring us very near to the age of the Christ, if not in their last edition, at least in the documents that compose them. Pure products of the Palestinian Christianity, exempt from all hellenic influence, full of the vivid and frank sentiment of Jerusalem, the Gospels are, in my opinion, an immediate echo of the reports of the first Christian generation. The popular travail which gave them birth, accomplished as it was without any distinct consciousness, and from many sides at once, could not have a great unity. Here was one genealogy, there another; here a marvellous story, there another. The fundamental type alone preserved through all these crosses, its identity of feature. The literary form was more fluctuating still, and as that went on in all phases epic and religious, it had but a secondary importance. Not till the very end of the creative period—not till the moment when the preservation of the traditions was alone thought of—do we see them deposited in four perfectly distinct texts. To these texts the considerations of authenticity and integrity, which before had no rigorous sense, can now be applied.

The travail of the legend, however, does not stop here. Every creation destined to captivate the admiration or the faith of the human race passes through two very distinct phases: the fertile epoch, to which are traced, in the depth of the popular mind, the grand features of the poem; and the epoch of manipulation, of adjustment, of verbal amplification, in which, the faculty of invention being spent, nothing more is done than to develop the old narratives after conventional methods. The first age, in the order of

wait for the more finished labours on evangelical history which the same scholar promises.

traditions that occupy us now, is that which produced the four canonical Gospels, all stamped with one and the same character of sobriety, simplicity, grandeur, and artless truth. The second is the period of the apocryphal Gospels—artificial compositions, in which the exhausted vein swells out with commonplaces and forced means of expansion, such as angelic apparitions, canticles, sketches from the Old Testament. Nothing more resembles the machinery of the factitious epopées, made up in the ages of decadence. The apocryphal gospels are to the canonical gospels what the *Ante Homericæ* and the *Post Homericæ* are to Homer—what the *Pouranas* in Indian literature are to the older mythological poems. It is a way of freshening up primitive narratives by recasting in a new narrative all the features of the original text, adding what might probably have occurred, developing the situation through joiner's process, making, if I may be allowed the word, a monograph of each small detail,—all done without genius, without even a variation from a set theme. It is, in one word, a calmly considered literary composition, having as its basis a natural and spontaneous work.

At bottom these two periods in the life of the legend correspond to the two ages of every religion. The primitive age, when the new credence issues from the popular instincts as the ray proceeds from the sun, the age of simple faith, without after-thought, without cavil or refutation of cavil; the age of reflection, when objection and apology appear, when the demands of reason begin to make themselves heard, when the marvel, formerly pliant, harmonious, a pure reflection of the moral sentiments of humanity, becomes timid, mean, sometimes immoral. In the primitive supernaturalism there was something so strong, so lofty, that the sternest rationalism cannot help now and then regretting its loss; but reflection is too far advanced, imagination too cold, to indulge thenceforward in such magni-

ficent bursts. As to the timid compromise which tries to cut down the supernatural in order to reconcile it with an intellectual state whose principles involve the denial of miracle, it only succeeds in rasing the most imperious instincts of the scientific epoch, without reviving the old marvellous poetry, which belongs exclusively to certain ages and to certain conditions of the human mind.

The history of religions presents some facts which, without being perfectly analogous to the preceding—for Jesus is unique in everything, and nothing can be compared with him—may yet throw a little light on the processes we have just been describing. The legend of the Bouddha Cakya-Mouni is the one which, in its mode of formation, most resembles that of the Christ, as Buddhism is the religion which, in the law of its development, most resembles Christianity. Cakya-Mouni is a reformer whose real existence cannot be doubted, although his life presents traits of an ideal perfection only; Cakya-Mouni is conceived without stain, born painlessly at the foot of a tree, welcomed at his birth by holy personages; Cakya-Mouni leaves the world, is tempted by the devil, surrounds himself with disciples, performs miracles without number.* His reform, almost exterminated in India, has a vast career outside of that country. He writes nothing himself, but three of his disciples reduce to writing his doctrine and his story. Both, however, remain floating and susceptible of increase, till the grand council of Patalipoutra. This council even does not stand in the way of a further revision, which is definitively closed by another council, held about 400 years after the founder's death. The enthusiast Chaitanya, who, at the beginning of the sixteenth century of our era, excited

* See the "Introduction to the History of Indian Bouddhism," by M. Eugene Burnouf, vol. I., p. 195, and the "Lalitavistara," or Life of Bouddha, translated by M. Edward Foucaux. (Paris, 1848.)

in certain parts of India, a great religious movement, also became the subject of a marvellous biography, completely finished, and saw himself regarded as an incarnation of Bhagavan.* Finally, the legend of Krishna has resemblances apparently no less striking with that of the Messiah. His infancy is menaced by a massacre quite similar to that of Herod; his childhood, in the midst of shepherds, is but a series of miracles; he dies pinned to a fatal tree by an arrow.†

But perhaps these instances suggest external resemblances rather than analogies of formative process.‡ It is certain that, as compared with the Bhagavata-Pourana, the gospel presents a singularly historical character, or, if you please, quite a uniform movement. The miracles of the gospel are generally conceived according to natural analogies, and do not so outrageously set at defiance the laws of physics as do the marvels in the Indo-European mythologies. Their creating motive is wholly moral; the invention of facts and circumstances is not audacious, and is confined to a timid copy of Old Testament commonplaces. The only episode in the history of Christ that has an epic character—the descent into hell—is not mentioned in the canonical gospels. Indicated for the first time in one of the epistles of Saint Peter (I. ch. 3, v. 19–22), this circumstance re-

* See the "Chaitanya Chandrodaya," published in the "Bibliotheca Indica" of the Calcutta Society, Numbers 47, 48, 80, and Wilson's Essay on the religious sects of the Hindoos, in the Asiatic Researches of the Calcutta Society, vol. xvi., p. 109, &c.

† See the "Bhagavat Dasam Askand," translated by M. Pavie. (Paris, 1852.)

‡ We will add that a theory proposed at the beginning of the studies on India, and since abandoned, according to which the legend of Krishna contained passages borrowed from "The Gospel of the Infancy," a gospel very popular throughout the East, and no doubt carried into India by the Manichæan sects, seems to find favour again in the eyes of the most sagacious philologists of Germany.

ceived its first great developments in later compositions, especially in the gospel of Nicodemus, a singular work, which seems to have owed its origin to the metaphors by which the fathers of the fourth century were pleased to express the triumph of Christ over death.*

Legend, then, and not myth, is the proper word for the stories of the earliest Christian period. The evangelical ideal was the result of a transfiguration, not of a creation. Is it said that the Jewish people, having already run through all the degrees of a literary development, were no longer intellectually in condition to produce legendary tales? Strauss replied, and reasonably, that, in fact, the Hebrew people never had a clear notion of positive history—that their most recent historical books, those of the *Maccabees*, those even of *Josephus*, whose authors were acquainted with hellenic culture, are not free from marvellous recitals; that the *Mischna*, later than the Gospels, hardly seems a product of the human intellect, it is so full of fables; that there is no history till the unreality of miracles is understood. If the rational education which the clear perception of this unreality presumes is wanting in many men of our day, how much more rare it must have been in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and in general among the masses over the whole Roman Empire! Religious exaltation finds everything credible, and under the impulse of powerful enthusiasm, a new creative faculty has been seen to start up in the most exhausted people. Besides, humanity is not simultaneous in its development. In all places situated under the same meridian the sun at the same season is not visible at the same moment; they who live in the mountain tops see it sooner than they who dwell in the valleys. So the period of reflection, of criti-

* See the work of M. Alfred Maury on the age of this Gospel, in vol. 30 of the "Memoirs of the Antiquarian Society of France." (Paris, 1850.)

cism, of history, does not dawn on all nations at the same hour. Our nineteenth century certainly is not much addicted to mythology; and yet even to-day, in some portions of the race where the state of spontaneity continues, myths are produced as in the olden times. Among the Arabs, Napoleon has already a fabulous legend fully developed. When the traces of La Perouse were discovered it was seen that he had become with the natives a subject for strange and fantastic traditions. I know of no myths more distinctly marked than those which still break out every day among certain tribes in the South of Africa, under the influence of Christian preaching.* It is not the date of a century that constitutes the intellectual state of humanity; it is the tradition of civilization; it is the numberless agencies, which sometimes, after an interval of ages, and at different points of space, reproduce states more or less analogous to those that have already been passed through. True, this analogy is never perfect, and there is an impropriety in applying the same name to the intellectual productions of the age of Jesus and to those of the primitive epochs of Greece and of India; but as soon as we have noted the inexactness of our classification we have a right to call into notice the common traits, which, in spite of marked differences, have ever characterized the artless creations of the human mind.

After all, the hypothesis of Strauss which at first presented itself as an assailant of the most sacred dogmas, left a great deal to mystery. The mythological school, while rejecting miracle and the supernatural order, retained a kind of psychological miracle. At least the God did not show himself in full daylight, but like the winged insect, under a web, which hid his slow development. It was

* See the work of an English missionary, Robert Moffat, "Twenty-three Years' Residence in the South of Africa."

known that nature alone had been at work beneath this veil, but none of her acts had been visible; the imagination was free to surround with respect and admiration the cradle of the nascent God. There was something divine, as in the origin of all great poems whose generation is unknown, and which, born in the depths of humanity, show themselves completely formed in the broad sunshine.

Strauss is essentially a moderate man; young Germany says, timid.* When the journals informed us in 1848 that the author of the "Life of Jesus," being called to play a political part, attached himself to the reactionary right wing, people asked if they were to regard this as the sign of a conversion, such as radical revolutions always provoke. It was really the natural unfolding of his character. In theology, Strauss is a liberal of the extreme left, not a radical. On a certain day the divine right, in thoroughly revolutionary fashion, was burned up:—but something like it was preserved. Strauss then was doomed to be left behind, as the saying is; he has been; a few years have sufficed to heap upon him three or four layers of ultra hegelians, who have run paradox into the ground and have treated the author of the "Life of Jesus" as a timid orthodox man, with the air of a believer in the Holy Ghost.

The great defect in the intellectual development of Germany is the abuse of reflection; I mean the deliberate application, to the present condition of the human mind,

* We must, however, distinguish here two periods in the life of Strauss: one previous to the revolution of Zurich (1839) during which he exhibited a great deal of moderation and fairness, in the midst of attacks often unjust and bitter, listening to objections with perfect sincerity, and modifying his system as the truth seemed to require; the other after the disgraceful uproar of which he was the innocent occasion, when we feel the reaction against the violence and the tirades of his enemies. The polemical intent is no longer dissembled, and he withdraws the concessions he had made, especially in regard to the personal attitude of Jesus.

of laws recognized in the past. The philosophy of history in noting the necessary march of systems, the laws according to which they succeed each other, and the way in which they oscillate towards the truth when they but pursue their natural course, has brought to light a speculative truth of the first order,—a truth, however, which becomes exceedingly dangerous the moment we attempt to draw from it inferences bearing on present occurrences. For to admit previous to examination, that any light and superficial mind that comes along and picks up the heritage of a man of genius is to be preferred before him, for the simple reason that he comes after him, is to award too high a place to mediocrity. Yet, this is the fault that Germany often commits. After the appearance of a great work in philosophy or science we are sure of seeing a whole swarm of critics hatched from it, who pretend to outstrip it, and who frequently do nothing but falsify it, or run directly counter to it. The law of progress, we repeat, is applicable to systems only when the production of the systems is perfectly spontaneous, and while their authors, without thinking of outstripping one another, attend solely to intrinsic considerations of truth. To neglect this important condition, is to make over the development of the human mind to chance, or to the caprices of a few rash and presumptuous minds.

“Revelation,” Strauss had said, “is neither an inspiration from without, nor an isolated experience within; it is simply one and the same thing with the history of the human race. The appearance of Jesus Christ is no longer to be regarded as the introduction of a new and divine principle; it is a shoot sprung from the deepest marrow of divinely endowed humanity.”* The new school, on the contrary, if we may group under this name the writings, very dissimilar but showing

* Strauss, “Die Christliche Glaubenslehre,” (Tübingen, 1840) vol. I. p. 68.

many features in common,—of Weisse, Wilke, Bruno Bauer, —claims that it can explain the phenomena of Christianity by simple and natural means, and reduce the formation of the legend respecting Jesus to the proportions of very ordinary fact. Strauss had attributed everything to the slow and secret action of unconscious tradition. The new school sees in the gospels, the work of an individual deliberate invention of the evangelist Mark.* “The hypothesis of Strauss,” says M. Bruno Bauer, is puzzling, for it is tautological. To explain the evangelical history by tradition, is to assume the necessity of explaining the tradition itself, and of finding an early basis for that. Strauss’s method is awkward and orthodox, and cannot be otherwise. In Strauss’s book, criticism has offered its last battle to theology on theologic ground. Whenever two adversaries are thus at swords’ points, the conquered always makes the conqueror yield something.”

Strauss supposed that the New Testament was based on the Old, and that the Jews, in the time of Christ, had a complete Christology, a fixed messianic type on which the character of the Christ might have been modelled trait by trait. M. Bauer, on the contrary, supposes that all the acts which exhibit Jesus to us as accomplishing the messianic ideal, and the ideal itself as well, were inventions of the primitive Christians. The Jews, according to him, had at this period no ideal of the Christ sharply defined; the history of Jesus, therefore, was not an ideal creation constructed after traditional types. In a word, the gospels are Christian productions, not Jewish as Strauss would have it. It was not Judaism that lent to Christianity the messianic ideal; quite the other way; it was the appearance and the development of the Christian principle, the

* *Critik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker und des Johannea*. (Leipzig) vols. i. and ii. 1841. Vol. iii. 1842.

battle between the Church and the synagogue which made the Jews familiar with the idea of the Messiah and made that faith the basis of their religious system.*

As for the historical Christ, who does not see, says M. Bauer, that everything related of him belongs to the ideal, and is in no wise implicated in the actual world? If there was a man to whom we can attribute the extraordinary revolution that shook the world eighteen hundred years ago, we may at any rate affirm that he could not have been shut up in the narrow outlines of the evangelical Christ. The evangelical Christ, as a historical fact, eludes us — —. He is not born as a man, he does not live as a man, he does not die as a man. It is labour lost to criticise his actions, or to apologize for them; for since he takes his position outside of human conditions, he can have little respect for the laws of human nature; more than that, this nature must be boldly repudiated by him. Hence the contrast between the human and the divine which constitutes the basis of the evangelical morality, and the trace of which (he thinks the fatal trace) M. Bauer endeavours to follow into the whole history of the Christian faith.

We have no wish to aid in giving a more serious impression of M. Bauer's work than it deserves. In vain would one seek there the noble dignity and calmness which are the beauty of Strauss's book. Blasphemy is intelligible and almost excusable in ages when, science being bound, the thinker avenges himself for the shackles he submits to wear, by an ironical respect and a secret rage. But we do not believe that the persecutions M. Bauer has suffered are sufficient to entitle him to be as declamatory as he is sometimes. The complete independence of criticism is, however, the best cure for similar flights. When the historian

* Opus cit., vol. I. p. 416.

of Jesus shall be as free in his judgments as the historian of Bouddha or of Mahomet, he will not dream of insulting those who do not think as he does. M. Eugene Bur-nouf never flew into a passion with the authors of the fabulous life of Cakya-Mouni, nor have any of the modern historians of Islamism cherished a very violent spite against Aboulfeda and the Mussulman authors who, in the spirit of true believers, have written the biography of their prophet.

IV.

Has Israelitish tradition anything to tell us about Jesus? Nothing authentic certainly; and not the least surprising of the peculiarities of that mysterious history is the absolute silence of contemporary documents, as well sacred as profane, touching an event which afterwards assumed colossal proportions.* The appearance of Christianity seems to have been a fact scarcely felt in the heart of Judaism; it made no noise, provoked no reaction, and left no memory. The Talmud, which takes up the whole intellectual movement of Judaism, at the era we speak of, preserves not one certain and appreciable trace even of the indirect influence of the Christ.† But, in the middle age, when the Church assumed an attitude of formidable hostility to the synagogue, it was necessary to have an understanding in regard to this strange co-religionist who had reached such peerless fame. Hence a legend grotesque and, for ob-

* The passages in the historian Josephus, relating to Jesus and the first Christians, are, in the opinion of the best critics, interpolated, or at least have been retouched by a Christian hand.

† To understand the singularity of this fact, think how deeply the appearance of Protestantism affected Catholicism. Since the Reformation, hardly a Catholic writer fails to betray the powerful action of that great convulsion.

vious reasons, ungracious.* If the Church smote with anathema the innovators who dared under her very eyes form religious societies, even when those societies did not threaten her own existence, what must the synagogue say of him, who to the crime of heresy added that of being its chief persecutor?

When modern criticism was introduced among the Israelites, the enlightened Jews must have been more eager than ever to construct a historical theory of the origins of Christianity, and the person of Jesus. In some aspects, they might seem to be better judges than the Christians, in others they were open to objection; and in fact, if we except the illustrious Moses Mendelssohn, and a few independent philosophers who belong rather to humanity at large than to a limited sect, the thinkers of the Israelitish religion cannot put by the charge of partiality, often even of a certain ill humour against the founder of Christianity. Not only are they less inclined than we to idealize Jesus,—that of course; but too often they take pleasure in looking up detached traits of the evangelical doctrine in the books of the Old Testament.† An exceedingly cheap style of criticism, for they might show me one after another, in Moses and the prophets, all the maxims of the Gospel, and still I should maintain that in the doctrine of Christ there is a new spirit, and on it an original seal. If a religion consisted of a certain number of dogmatic propositions and a morality couched in a few aphorisms, it would perhaps be true to say that Christianity is nothing more than Judaism. But the fundamental principles of morality being for the

* See the "Bibliotheca Judaica Anti-Christiana" of Rossi. Parma, 1800. 8vo. pp. 61, 94, 114, 121.

† See especially a work published in several successive numbers of the "Archives Israelites" (1849) by the learned (!) Duker, on this question: What has Christianity borrowed from Judaism?

most part simple and universal, there is no discovery to be made in this order of truths; originality here reduces itself to a greater or less delicacy of sentiment. Now, set face to face the Gospel and the sentences of the rabbins who were contemporaries of Jesus, collected in the *Pirke avoth*, and then compare the impression made by the two books! Success, moreover, is here a decisive criterion: the Gospel has converted the world, while it is very doubtful if the sentences of the rabbins would of themselves have effected just that.

The book of M. Salvador, "Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine" (Paris, 1838), is the highest expression of Jewish criticism on the life of Jesus. The subject is more largely conceived, the form is more flowing and fine, than in the writings of Strauss and of the German scholars. It is no more a painful theological controversy; it is an attempt to explain the origin of Christianity, like any other grand fact in the human mind, on the ground of disinterested science. Unhappily, the author, who deserves a distinguished rank as a philosopher and a writer, does not quite meet our wishes as regards erudition and historical criticism. M. Salvador has thoroughly studied Judaism only, and still he shows no acquaintance with the immense exegetical labours of Germany, on the books of the Old and New Testaments,—labours that have caused so complete a revolution in the science of Hebraic antiquities. Though he has fairly mastered the Bible, Philo, the Talmud, he makes little use of the Jewish or the Christian apocrypha, or of the earliest Christian authors.

When we pass from the reading of Strauss to that of Salvador, we are struck by the contrast between the German criticism—subtle, winged, always suspicious of fact—and the other over-confident criticism, which accepts all the narratives of the past without discussion. M. Salvador lacks feeling for the delicate laws which preside at the

formation of great legends—laws which must have been studied in very different applications in order to be understood in their true character. For him the Gospel is history, with some elements of the marvellous mingled with it. He treats it very much as Rollin and the old school treated Titus Livius, discussing as real facts the incidents of the birth of Jesus, the flight into Egypt, etc. The story of the Passion is the only one in which he admits an artificial arrangement, and in which he recognizes an intention to set forth the ideal sufferings which, according to the messianic interpretation, had excited the lamentations of the prophets. This portion of the evangelical representations, he says, "has far less the character of history than of poetry and drama, which, at their convenience, neglect the conditions of time and space, and sacrifice all secondary personages, be they real or invented, to the dominant idea of the subject, and to the chief character." Then he shows how two of the principal actors in the Passion, Pilate and Barabbas, have been defamed to meet the necessities of the legend.* Here M. Salvador has grazed the mythical explanation, but without perceiving it, and under the guidance, moreover, of an interested purpose, which he does not conceal—that of relieving his co-religionists of the disgraceful part which the Evangelists make them play in the Passion. With this exception, M. Salvador regards himself as standing in the full light of history. If he does not think that Jesus left documents from his own hand on his life and teaching (he would not, however, be much surprised if he had †), he admits at least an oral tradition from the first disciples, that has a fixed value. If Strauss doubts far too much, it is certain that M. Salvador doubts far too little. The primeval facts of great religious phenomena take place, all of them, in the

* *Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine*, vol. ii. ch. 9.

† *Ib.* i. p. 169.

region of intellectual spontaneity, and leave no trace of themselves. Religions no more recall their infancy than does the individual man his. For the living being consciousness does not begin till he is grown and matured; that is to say, when the primitive facts have for ever disappeared.

The question of the origin of Christian doctrines M. Salvador has treated in a manner on the whole satisfactory. All the antecedents of Christianity disclose themselves to his eyes in Judaism, as modified by the East after the captivity, and by Greece after Alexander. Judaism is, as it were, the egg in which the new religion was formed and nourished at first, before it came into the full light and lived its own life. Greece could act on Jesus only by the indirect influence that it had exerted on Judaism—an influence that must not be exaggerated so far as Palestinian Judaism is concerned. There is hardly one considerable element in primitive Christianity that is not found in Philo, among the Essenes, or in the orthodox doctrine of the Synagogue. The fundamental idea of the nascent sect—reference to Abraham of the whole race of Adam, an idea which contained the secret of Christian proselytism, and subsequently the whole destiny of the church—is found in the "Treatise on Nobility," in which Philo, like a philosopher and a Christian, develops, from the earliest times, this truth: that nobility proceeds from individual virtue, and not from Abraham's blood.

The question of theurgic arts and of miracles in general, of the miracle of the resurrection in particular, the part of Simon the magician, with other episodes besides, are treated by M. Salvador with great delicacy and sense. The criticism of the narrative of the Passion is particularly remarkable for the precision which the author brings to it, for the boldness of the views which he displays, and the singular controversy which is attached to them. In his

work on the "Institutions of Moses and of the Hebrew People," M. Salvador had already essayed an apology for the Jewish council that condemned Jesus. In his judgment, the Sanhedrim did no more than apply the existing laws: Jesus sought his own death, and regarding him simply as a citizen, as the Jews necessarily did, he deserved it. "The interest of the sacred purity of history compels us to repeat, in every form of statement, that the Christian school can by no means be accepted when it reduces the action of the supreme council of the Jews, in this solemn debate, to a question of base jealousy, to an affair of the courts; when it heaps ignominy on the Jewish nation, to which it owed its birth, and whose finest ornaments it appropriated under pretext of the wilful course of their ancestors in pronouncing on Jesus a sentence which had been predicted and provoked by the Master's whole theory respecting the fulfilment of the Scriptures. Herein the whole school of Nazarene or Galilean Christianity has given to the world the ineffaceable proof of its being a sect and a party; it has proved that its mission, even in its most legitimate, its happiest state, offered nothing but a specialty; it has proved, finally, that the universal judgment of events and of men, the reign of the God of the prophets, the God of truth, the just God, belongs exclusively neither to the period of its trials and of its rule, be that longer or shorter, nor to the essence of its nature."*

The scandal which some rigid minds affected to take when M. Cousin, in one of his most ingenious fancies, ventured on the defence of the tribunal which condemned Socrates, maintained that Anytus was a worthy citizen, the Areopagus an equitable and moderate tribunal, and that if any cause of astonishment existed, it was that Socrates was accused so late, and was condemned by so small a majority;

* *Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine*, ii., pp. 168-169.

this scandal, I say, was nothing in comparison with that excited by M. Salvador when he pleaded for Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim, so long condemned by the conscience of Christendom. It was à-propos of this that the elder M. Dupin undertook, in the "Gazette des Tribunaux," to revise the trial of Jesus.* Under the pen of the liberal advocate nothing was wanting to ground a veritable proceeding in error: agents sent to provoke the accused, fraud, *brigade grise*, individual liberty violated without a warrant, sequestration of persons, captious interrogations, union of the functions of accuser and of judge in the same man, encroachment of the executive on the judiciary. For ourselves, God preserve us from pronouncing on such a question any other opinion than that of Jesus himself: *It was necessary that the Son of Man should die.* Without that he would not have presented the ideal of the sage, hateful to the superstitious, as to the politicians, and paying for his moral beauty with his life. A vulgar death to crown the life of Jesus! What blasphemy! As to seeking what passed in the breast of those who condemned him, that were a question useless and sterile, even were it not insoluble. Who knows if he himself be deserving of love or of hate? Who can correctly analyze what passes in the depth of his own heart? He that says, as Caiaphas said: *It is expedient that one man should die for the people*, is certainly a detestable politician; and yet, alas! he may be an honest man. More than once history has decided in favour of persecutors and of persecuted at once, and doubtless in the life eternal the persecuted will thank the persecutors for having procured for them, through suffering, the seal of perfection.

* "Jesus devant Caïph et Pilate." (Paris, 1822.)

V.

But if, renouncing the habits of mind which make us familiar with marvels, we reflect now on the destiny of the revealers whom the religious consciousness has raised above humanity, we shall be struck with astonishment, and we shall understand why they—objects of a love and a hate equally fanatical—reach so late their true place in history, the place which, in the eyes of criticism, they deserve. A thousand motives of respect and timidity hinder the free exercise of rational discussion in their case, and render their condition before science rather unfavorable than otherwise. They seem to be put under the ban of humanity, and the silence that is kept in regard to them often deceives as to the importance of the part they played. A history of philosophy, in which Plato should occupy a volume, should, it seems to me, devote two to Jesus, and yet there is more than one history of philosophy in which this last name is not once mentioned. Such is the fate of every man who has been consecrated by religion. How much the body of Hebrew literature, for instance, has suffered in the eyes of science and of taste, in becoming the Bible! Whether from ill-humour or from lack of faith, scientific and literary criticism has some difficulty in regarding as a portion of its domain the works that have been thus set apart for the benefit of theology. Could the author of that charming little poem called the Song of Songs ever suspect that one day he would be taken from the company of Anacreon, to be set up as an inspired bard who sang of no love but the divine? It is time science accustomed herself to take her own, wherever she finds it. The old philosophy, which seemed to concede to theologians that religions constitute an order by themselves, with which science has no concern, was led to look on them as hostile towers, erected

by a rival power. It would have been more respectful if it had been more audacious; for how could reason be severe or contemptuous towards any product of the human mind a moment after it had recognized itself in all those products without distinction or invidious comparison?

When the critics shall have resolutely placed themselves at this point of view, Jesus will appear to them the most extraordinary of all the problems of history, and they will be held excusable who, struck by the depth of the mystery, have proclaimed him God; for these at least have comprehended, if they have not explained, him. Strange destiny, well calculated to bring the marvels of the world of spirits within our fingers' reach,—that of an obscure man,—even orthodoxy does not forbid our calling him so,—author of the grandest revolution that ever changed the face of humanity, become the link between two leaves of history, loved furiously, furiously attacked, so that there is not one round of the moral ladder on which he has not been placed. Native of a small district, very exclusive in its nationality, very provincial in thought, he has become the universal ideal. Athens and Rome adopted him, the Barbarians fell at his feet, and even to-day rationalism dares not look at him closely except on its knees. Yes, whatever he may have been, his fortune has been more astonishing than himself!

Let those who limit the resources of the human mind by the narrow boundaries of vulgar good sense—let those who have no conception of the daring originality of the spontaneous creations of conscience—beware how they address themselves to such a problem, or be content to apply to it the convenient solution of the supernatural. To comprehend Jesus we must be hardened to miracle; we must raise ourselves above our age of reflection and tedious analysis, if we would contemplate the faculties of the soul in that state of fresh and unconscious liberty, in which, disdaining our



painful combinations, they reach their object without a thought of themselves. That was the age of psychological miracles. To have recourse to a supernatural intervention for an explanation of facts which have become impossible in the actual condition of the world, is proof that the hidden forces of spontaneity are overlooked. The more we penetrate into the roots of the human mind, the more shall we understand that in all orders the miraculous is but the unexplained; that to produce the phenomena of primitive humanity there was no need of a God always intermeddling with the movement of things, and that these phenomena are the regular development of laws immutable as reason and perfection.

Of course we must despair of ever arriving at the complete understanding of surprising phenomena, which the lack of documents, far more than their mysterious character, will hide from us beneath an eternal obscurity. In the solution of problems of this high order both the supernatural hypothesis and the over-simple natural hypothesis—those of the eighteenth century, for example—which reduce everything to the proportions of an ordinary fact of imposture or credulity, must equally be repelled. Should one offer to me a definite account of Jesus, which would leave nothing more to ask, I should reject it; its very clearness would be the best proof of its insufficiency. The essential thing here is not an explanation of everything, but a conviction that with more knowledge everything might be explained.

Now this is what the comparative study of religions and of literatures abundantly demonstrates to the mind initiated in the processes of criticism. The East has never known the purely intellectual grandeur which can dispense with miracles. It makes small account of a sage who is not a thaumaturgist. When the Arabians had adopted Aristotle as the great master of science, they constructed

for him a legend as miraculous as that of a prophet. They pretended that he had been transported to heaven on a pillar of fire, etc. The East has never attained to a perfect clearness of consciousness;* it has always looked at nature with the eyes of a child. The child instinctively mixes its impressions with its narratives; it has not learned how to separate things from the judgment it has passed on them, and from its personal view of them; it does not recite facts, but imaginations that have been suggested to it by facts, or rather, it tells itself. Every fable that smiles capriciously is accepted; it improvises strange ones itself, and then turns them into assertions. Such was the state of the human mind in the artless ages. The legend was born of itself, and without premeditated deceit; no sooner was it born than it was welcomed, it went on growing like a snow-ball; no criticism was near to control it. We should say, in fact, that miracle did not then present itself as supernatural. Miracle was the habitual order, or rather there were no laws, nor was there a nature for men who were strangers to our ideas of experimental science, who saw everywhere the immediate action of free agents. The idea of natural laws appeared later, and is accessible only to cultivated intellects. Even now, the simple have an extreme facility in acknowledging a miracle. It is not then at the dawn of the human mind alone that the imagination lets itself be caught by the fascinations of the marvellous; the legendary productiveness lasts till the advent of the scientific age, only diminishing in power

* China, gifted with its great and positive instinct for the finite, must always be excepted when the East is spoken of. This people is the least supernaturalistic of all, and that perhaps is the cause of its mediocrity. It is good, not to dream all the time like India, but to have had a dream in childhood. The perfume of it lingers, and a tradition of poetry, so to speak, which beguiles the age when imagination is no more.

as it is overruled more and more by regard for realities.*

The application of these principles to Palestine may easily be foreseen. The Jewish people, especially after the captivity in Babylon, was possessed of the ideal of a Messiah, at first vague, indecisive, at moments evanescent, but always reappearing with more vigour and more clearness of characterization. It anticipated him at first as the Saviour who should restore their temple and their country, as a model King composed of the souvenirs of David and Solomon, who should make Israel the centre of the world. Afterwards when cruel humiliations compel this astonishing little nation to recognize its material weakness, the type of the liberator is combined with that of the suffering and devoted prophet. He is no longer merely the perfect King surrounded with a halo of glory and wisdom: he is the man of sorrows dying and triumphing by his death.

Do we comprehend the influence which such an image, brooded over for ages, and gathering up all their aspirations, must have exercised over the ardent faith of a people who had no life now save in the future? If it be true, as ancient physiology believed, that the mother impresses on the child she bears, the stamp of her desire and thought, what might not an ideal so persistent produce in Israel's fruitful womb? That long gestation of six or seven centuries could not fail to bear its fruit. And in fact, when the Roman dominion had at last succeeded in provoking the Jewish nation to the state of frenzy in which extraordinary phenomena are produced, the signs of the time broke forth on all sides. The intellectual condition of the Jews at this epoch cannot be described, except after very close study of the original

* See the fine analyses of faith in miracles given by M. Littré in the preface to the second edition of his translation of the "Life of Jesus," and in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," February 15, 1856.

sources. The marvels of the Gospel are the soberest good-sense by the side of the Jewish Apocrypha and the Talmud. Can we be surprised that in the midst of so strange a movement, something like the prodigies of the primitive days of humanity should have reappeared, one of those deep manifestations whose beginning escapes the observation which does not rise above vulgar experience?

Let us draw a veil over these mysteries which even reason dares not sound. Not in a few pages can we attempt a solution of the most obscure problem of history. Besides, the critical sense is not inoculated in an hour; he who has not cultivated it by a long scientific and intellectual discipline will always find adverse arguments to oppose to the more delicate inductions. To raise and cultivate minds, to make familiar the grand results of natural and philological science, is the only means of making the new ideas of criticism understood and accepted. To those who have not the necessary preparation, these ideas can only appear false and dangerous subtleties.

Let me give an example: The four canonical gospels often tell the same fact with very considerable variations in details. This is explicable on all the rationalistic hypotheses; for it need not be more difficult of explanation in the gospels than in the historical or legendary narratives of other religions, which often present contradictions more violent still. But it is not so easy on the supernatural theory of inspiration. There is no "almost" with the Holy Spirit; a thing cannot have taken place in two ways at the same time. Here then, to the view of independent criticism is a decisive objection. And yet we cannot bring the orthodox believer fairly to allow it. If the circumstances of the different narratives are not absolutely irreconcilable, he will say that one of the texts has preserved certain details omitted by the other, and he will set the diverse circumstances end to end at the risk of composing

an altogether incoherent recital. If the incidents are decidedly contradictory, he will say that the fact narrated is double or triple, although in the eyes of sound criticism the several narrators have plainly the same event in view. Thus, the accounts in John and in the synoptics (by this collective name, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are designated) of the last entry of Jesus into Jerusalem being irreconcilable, the harmonists supposed that he entered twice, in immediate succession, and with circumstances almost identical. In the same way, the three denials of Saint Peter, differently narrated by the four evangelists, constitute in the view of the orthodox eight or nine separate denials, while Jesus predicted but three. The incidents of the resurrection give room for similar difficulties, for which similar solutions are offered. What is to be said of such an exegesis? That it involves a metaphysical impossibility? No. It would be labour thrown away to silence the man who would maintain that; but whoever has the critical sense in the least degree developed will repel it as contrary to the rules of interpretation which would be followed in any other case. We must set the same value on the replies which the apologists make to the difficulties drawn from the silence which all the gospels, but the fourth especially, keep in regard to capital circumstances or to whole episodes. This they say is merely a negative argument from which no conclusion can be drawn. But would they reason thus in any secular matter, and are not these the sort of arguments on which a true criticism often bases its most solid inductions?*

* The conclusion of *inadmissible* which the theologians oppose to the negative argument, is wholly characteristic of the scholastic and legal habits which they substitute for delicacy of mind, the only faculty that can discover truth in history. For example—are we concerned to establish the relatively modern age of institutions or prescriptions whose high antiquity the theologian is compelled to maintain, criticism draws a very solid induction

To ask orthodoxy to apply to the sacred books the same criticism it applies to profane literature is to ask what it cannot grant; on the other hand, to decline combat on this ground is to withdraw from the discussion. This is the reason why all controversy between persons who believe in the supernatural and persons who do not is smitten with barrenness. We must say of miracles what Schleiermacher said of angels:—It cannot be proved that no such beings exist; nevertheless, the whole conception is one that could not be born in our time; it belongs exclusively to the primitive idea of the world. Not from one line of reasoning, but from the whole mass of modern sciences, comes this immense result. Nothing is supernatural.* Since being began, everything that has taken place in the world of phenomena has been the regular development of the laws of being, laws which constitute but one order of government—nature—whether physical or moral. Whoever says *above or outside of nature*, in the order of facts, utters a contradiction, as one would who should say *super-divine* in the order of substances. “In rejecting miracles,” says M. Littré,† very aptly, “the modern age has not acted from deliberate purpose; for it received the tradition of them with that of its ancestors—always dear and carefully kept—but without wishing to reject them, without trying to, and by the single fact of the development with which it was bursting. An

from the silence of all historical documents anterior to a certain epoch. How do you know, the theologian may reply, that these institutions did not exist without being mentioned? No doubt: but what proof is there that instituted mysteries did not exist in the Homeric age, except that the Iliad and Odysey say nothing about them? What proof is there that our political and judicial institutions did not exist under the Merovingians, except that the historians of the period make no mention of them? The same with all historical results expressed under the negative form.

* I am under necessity, in order to prevent all misunderstanding, of referring here to the explanation of this word given in the note on p. 171.

† Preface to the “Life of Jesus,” 2d ed., p. 5.

experience which nothing has ever occurred to contradict has taught it that every miraculous story had its origin in vivid imagination, in complaisant credulity, in ignorance of natural laws. With all the research that has been made, no miracle has ever been wrought where it could be observed and proved."

As human affairs obey laws more difficult to seize than those of inanimate nature, the notion of supernatural intervention is defended there more successfully. Long after people have ceased to believe in natural miracles Jesus will be a psychological miracle. They will not be able to take in the fact that the contemporary of Hillel and Shammai was their spiritual brother; that the same seed produced side by side the Talmud and the Gospel, the most singular monument of intellectual aberration and the highest creation of the moral sense. One epoch, provided it pass common mediocrity, may give birth to the most opposite phenomena. Did not the same revolution proclaim at once the formula of civil rights which seems destined to be the law of the future, and terrify the world by scenes of horror? In these grand crises of the human mind we must be ready for everything. Only the productions of calm and tranquil periods are consistent with themselves. The appearance of the Christ would be inconceivable in the midst of logic and regularity; it is perfectly natural in the strange storm that swept over the human mind in Judæa at the period we are speaking of. A more extended view of the philosophy of history would satisfy us that the real causes that produced Jesus must be sought for, not outside of humanity, but in the heart of the moral world; that the laws which resulted in Jesus were not exceptional and transitory, but the permanent laws of the human conscience applied at one of those extraordinary junctures in which sublimities and follies appear simultaneously; very much as geology, after long recourse to causes explanatory of the

revolutions of the globe different from those that are in action to-day, comes back to proclaim that the actual laws were sufficient to effect the revolutions. Let the same conditions return, the same phenomena will reappear; and in spite of the seeming exhaustion of the creative forces of humanity, we shall see once more a new spirit get birth spontaneously, without, perhaps, becoming personified so exclusively in this or that individual.

Strauss, then, does but enunciate one of the narrowest principles of the modern mind when he pronounces unhistorical, at least in the letter, every narrative in which the laws of nature are violated, and when he proclaims that the absolute cause never interferes by exceptional acts with the chain of finite causes. Let us not look for the dignity of Jesus in the region of chimeras. "What!" says Strauss, "take a deeper interest in a few cures wrought in Galilee than in the miracles of moral existence and the history of the world, in the perpetually increasing dominion of man over nature, in the irresistible power of thought, incessantly forcing matter to bend beneath it? What particular interest then can attach to one isolated fact, which has no other value than that it represents in symbol this eternal movement?"

Strange! what constituted the grandeur of Jesus in the eyes of his contemporaries and first adorers, is for us a stain on his image, a feature by which this image is deprived of its universality, and made to take the particular hue of his age and country. Who is not pained to see the wonder-worker by the side of the sublime moralist? to find in the Gospels, on the same page with the Sermon on the Mount or the discourse at the Supper, stories of men possessed, which, if invented in our time, would meet nothing but incredulity or a smile?

Rigorously to separate the historical from the evangelical Christ—the real personage who bore the name of Jesus from the ideal personage of the Gospel—is a thing impos-

sible. But when we affirm that Jesus passed his youth in Galilee; that he received no hellenic education; that he made a few journeys to Jerusalem, where his imagination was vividly impressed, and where he entered into communication with the soul of his people; that he preached a doctrine hardly orthodox when judged by the Judaism of the Scribes, a doctrine bearing, perhaps, the stamp of some provincial peculiarity (Galilee had a bad repute for orthodoxy as well as for the purity of its speech); that the strict Jews opposed him strenuously, because his lofty moral tone disturbed and distanced them; that they succeeded in getting him put to death, as the sequel to an almost triumphal entry decreed to him by his compatriots, who with him had visited Jerusalem for the feast of Passover; we certainly say nothing that the severest historian must not accept. We may admit that legend worked over the life of Jesus as in the case of all poems, resolving the real hero into an ideal type, and yet not deny the lofty personality of the sublime and truly divine founder of the Christian faith. Strauss himself grants that beneath the legend there is history; but he did not say it out loud, because his theological habits showed him an easier system of interpretation in the full adoption of the mythological hypothesis.

We will leave without answer questions which criticism cannot be forbidden to raise, but which, doubtless, it will never satisfactorily meet. How far were the doctrine and the moral character which the Gospel attributes to Christ historically the doctrine and the moral character of Jesus? Was Jesus actually a heaven-sent original man, or a Jewish sectary, like John the Baptist? Was he conscious of what he was and of what he was to become? Does not Jesus seem to us devoid of human frailties simply because we look at him from a distance and through the mist of legend? Is it not because we lack the means to criticise him that he appears to us in history as the solitary sinless person? If

we could touch him as we can Socrates, should we not find some little earthly clay on his feet too? Here, as in all other religious creations, the admirable, the celestial, the divine, will revert by right to humanity, will they not? There is, I am aware, a criticism which is distrustful of individuals, and guards itself against allowing to them too large a place; it thinks it is the popular mass that almost always creates the beauty of the men who are raised to the honours of apotheosis; it is afraid of misplacing its admiration when the question is of persons about whom knowledge can affirm nothing; it remembers that a great disproportion may ordinarily be observed between the parts actually played by personages with whom the foundations of religion are associated, and their destinies after death:—St. Peter, a fisherman of Galilee, has ruled the world for a thousand years; Mary, a humble woman of Nazareth, has ascended through the successive and continually enhancing hyperbole of generations, till she has reached the bosom of the Trinity! Nevertheless,—we say it boldly,—it is never chance that singles out an individual to be idealized. The portion of the Gospels that includes the most of historic incident is that which tells of the Passion and the death; now this is especially the portion in which Jesus appears with most grandeur. There is no man who, in reading these admirable pages, where the world has found such high moral teaching, does not feel the immediate reflection of a great soul, and does not place the touching and august sufferer of Calvary among those whom death has consecrated. Without doubt the web with which humanity covers over certain characters almost conceals the primitive reality; but, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that there are works which speak louder than any documents, and that if history is obliged to measure the glory of individuals by the trail of splendour or of beneficence which they have left on the world, it can find no exaggeration in the

incomparable brilliancy with which the religious consciousness of the human race has surrounded the brow of Jesus.

The philosopher as well as the theologian must therefore recognize the two natures in Jesus,—separate the human from the divine, and not, in his adoration, confound the real with the ideal hero. The Christ—that is, the character which comes out in the New Testament—must be unhesitatingly adored; for all sublimity partakes of the divine, and the Christ of the Gospel is the most beautiful incarnation of God, in the fairest of forms—a noble man. He is really the Son of God and the Son of Man—God in man. They were not deceived, those great interpreters of Christianity, who imagined him born without an earthly father, and attributed his generation to no natural intercourse, but to a virgin's womb and a celestial influence.

Admirable symbol, which hides beneath its veil the true explanation of the ideal Christ! As to the man of Galilee, whom the reflections of divinity almost conceal from our view, what matters it if he does escape us? Assuredly the historian should desire the solution of such a problem; but at bottom the needs of the religious and the good man have little concern in it. Ah! what matters it to us what passed in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago? How does it concern us that Jesus was born in such or such a village—that he had such or such ancestors—that he suffered on such or such a day of the holy week? Let us leave such questions to the researches of the curious. Would the Homeric poems be finer if it were proved that the deeds that are sung there were all veritable facts? Would the Gospel be more beautiful if it were true that at a certain point of space and of time a man had realized to the letter the features it presents to us? The portrait of a sublime character gains nothing by its conformity with an actual hero. The Jesus who is truly admirable is beyond historical criticism: he has his throne in the conscience; he will never

be displaced except by a higher ideal, he is king for a long time yet. What do I say? His beauty is eternal—his reign will never have an end. The Church has been left behind; it has outgrown itself; the Christ has never been outgrown. So long as one noble heart shall aspire to moral beauty, so long as one elevated soul shall tremble with joy before the manifestation of the divine, the Christ will secure worshippers through the truly immortal part of his being. For let us not deceive ourselves, and let us not stretch too much the limits of the imperishable. In the very Christ of the Gospels one part will die; the local and national form—the Jew, the Galilean; but one part will abide; the great master of morality, the persecuted saint, he who said to men: Ye are sons of the same Heavenly Father. The wonder-worker and the prophet will die; the man and the sage will endure; or, rather, the eternal beauty will live for ever in this sublime name, as in all those whom humanity has chosen to keep it in mind of its own nature, and to transport it by the view of its own image. Behold there the living God! This is the adorable one!

MAHOMET AND THE ORIGINS OF ISLAM.

ALL beginnings are obscure; religious beginnings even more than others. Products of the spontaneous instincts of human nature, religions no more recal their infancy than the adult recalls the history of his childish years and the successive phases in the unfolding of his consciousness; mysterious chrysalids, they never come to full daylight till their forms reach their perfect maturity. It is with the beginning of religions as with the beginning of humanity. Science demonstrates that on a certain day by virtue of natural laws which so far had presided over the development of things, without deviation or external intervention, the thinking being appeared endowed with all his faculties, and in all his essential elements perfect; and yet, to try to explain the advent of man on the earth by the laws that have governed the phenomena of our globe since the creative power of nature ceased, would be to open the door to imaginations so extravagant that no serious mind would dwell on them for an instant. It is undeniable again, that on a certain day, man, by the natural and spontaneous expansion of his faculties, improvised language; and yet no image borrowed from the actual state of the human mind can aid us in conceiving this strange fact, which has become wholly impossible in our circle of reflection. So we must give up the attempt to explain by processes accessible to experience the primitive facts of religions, facts which have no analogies since humanity has lost its religious productiveness. In view of the impotence of reflecting reason to lay the foun-

dation of belief and to nurture its strength, how should we be able to appreciate the hidden force which ever and anon penetrates and quickens the vitals of humanity? The theory of the supernaturalist offers perhaps fewer difficulties than the frivolous solutions of men who address themselves to the problems of the origin of a religion without having sounded the mysteries of the instinctive consciousness; and if, before this theory can be rejected, it were necessary to arrive at a rational opinion on so many really divine facts, few men would have the right to disbelieve in the supernatural.

Does it follow, however, that science must abandon its effort to explain the formation of the globe, because the phenomena that have brought it to the condition in which we find it, are no longer reproduced on a grand scale? Must it despair of explaining the appearance of life and of living species because the existing epochs have ceased to be creative? Must it give no account of the origin of language, because languages are no more born; of the genesis of religions because religions are no longer produced? Surely not. It is the work of science, work infinitely delicate and often dangerous, to guess at the primæval by the faint traces it has left. Reflection has not removed us so completely from the creative age that we cannot revive in ourselves the feeling of spontaneous life. History, miserly as she is of her unrevealed epochs, is nevertheless not wholly dumb; she permits us, if not to attack questions of origin directly, at least to draw lines about them. Then too, since nothing is absolute in human affairs, and since there are no two facts in the past that come rigorously within the same category, we have intermediate shades to represent to us phenomena which are inaccessible to immediate study. In the slow gradations of the actual condition of the globe, geology finds data for an explanation of previous revolutions. The linguist, while working at

the phenomena of developing speech as they go on under his eyes, is led to the discovery of the laws that presided over the formation of language. The historian in the dearth of primæval facts which marked the advent of religions can study the degeneracies, the abortive attempts, the demi-religions,—if I may venture to say so—that show plainly, although on a reduced scale, the processes by which the ground-work of the unreflecting epochs was produced.

The birth of Islamism is, in this regard, a unique and truly inappreciable fact. Islamism was the last religious creation of humanity, and in many respects the least original. Instead of the mystery in which other religions wrapped their cradle, this was born in the full light of history; its roots are even with the ground. The life of its founder is as well known to us as that of the reformers of the XVIth century. We can follow year by year the fluctuations of his thought, his contradictions, his weaknesses. Elsewhere religious beginnings are lost in dream; the toil of the most untrammelled criticism can hardly detect the reality beneath the deceitful appearances of myth and legend. Islamism, on the contrary, appearing in a centre of advanced reflection, is absolutely destitute of the supernatural. Mahomet, Omar, Ali are neither seers, nor illuminati, nor magicians. Each of them knows perfectly well what he is about, neither of them is his own dupe; each presents himself for examination, naked and with all the frailties of humanity about him.

Thanks to the excellent labours of MM. Weil* and Caussin de Perceval,† we may say that the problem of the

* "Mohammed der Prophet, sein Leben und seine Lehre." Stuttgart, 1843; "Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran." Bielefeld, 1844; "Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner," Frankfurt, 1845; "Geschichte der Chalifen." Mannheim, vol. i. 1846; vol. ii. 1848; vol. iii. 1851.

† "Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme pendant l'époque de Mahomet et jusqu'à la réduction de toutes les tribus sous la loi Musulmane." Paris, 3 vols. 1848.

origin of Islamism has in our day reached a solution all but complete. M. Caussin de Perceval especially has introduced into the question an element of first-rate importance by the new information he has supplied, on the subject of Mahomet's antecedents and precursors, a delicate matter which had hardly been noticed before. This admirable work will remain a model of that exact, solid erudition removed from all conjecture which characterizes the French school. The tact and penetration of M. Weil assure a distinguished rank to his labours on Islamism. In respect of choiceness and wealth of original material, however, his work is inferior to that of our learned fellow countryman, and he is open to reproach for placing too much confidence in Turkish and Persian authorities, which are of very little value in the present question. America and England have also given attention to Mahomet.* A well known writer of romance, Washington Irving, has told the story of his life in an interesting way, without evincing any very elevated historical feeling. This book, however, marks a real progress, when we think of M. Charles Forster's two thick volumes published in 1829, greatly relished by clergymen,† the aim of which was to prove that Mahomet was simply "the little horn of the he-goat which figures in the eighth chapter of Daniel, and that the Pope was the great horn." On this ingenious parallel, M. Forster founded a complete philosophy of history, wherein the Pope represents the corruption of Christendom in the West, and Maho-

* "Lives of Mahomet and his Successors." New York, 1850.

† "Mahometism Unveiled; an inquiry in which that arch-heresy, its diffusion and continuance are examined on a new principle, tending to confirm the evidences and aid the propagation of the Christian Faith." This is the same Mr. Charles Forster, author of a mystification on the Sinaitic inscriptions, in which he claims to have recovered the primitive language and writing, the original text of Exodus, &c.

met the corruption of Christendom in the East; striking resemblances between Mahometanism and the papacy result!

It would be a curious history, that of the ideas which Christian nations have entertained of Mahomet from the time when the mendacious Turpin told of the golden idol *Mahom*, which was adored at Cadiz, and which Charlemagne dared not destroy, for fear of a legion of demons that were shut up in it, to the day when criticism has honestly accorded to the father of Islamism his title of prophet. The virgin faith of the first half of the middle age, which had but the vaguest notions respecting the worships outside of Christendom, painted *Maphomet*, *Baphomet*, *Bafum* (whence Bafumery, Mahomery, Mummery, designations of all superstitious and unclean rites), as a false god to whom human sacrifices were offered. In the twelfth century Mahomet began to pass for a false prophet, and there was serious thought of unmasking his imposture. The translation of the Koran, done by order of Peter the Venerable, the polemical works of the Dominicans and of Raymond Lully, the information furnished by William of Tyre and Matthew Paris, helped to spread more wholesome ideas respecting Islamism and its founder. To the idol *Mahom* succeeds the heresiarch *Mahomet*, placed by Dante in a very honourable region of his *Inferno* (xxviii. 31),—among the sowers of discord, with Frà Dolcino and Bertrand de Born. This already indicated a revolution in men's minds. In periods of truly artless faith the believer is unconscious of the existence of religions differing from his own, or, if he is aware of their existence, they look to him so impure and ridiculous that their supporters can be, in his eyes, only mad or stubborn.

What a shock the mind experiences the day it discovers that by the side of the dogma which was supposed to be unique there are others which also claim to have come from heaven! The word of the "Three Impostors," which

seized so strongly the whole thirteenth century, and of which the popular imagination made a book, expresses this first incredulity that sprang from the study of the Arabian philosophy and from a tolerably exact acquaintance with Islamism.* The name of Mahomet thus became almost the synonym of impious, and when Orcagna, in his Hell, at the Campo Santo of Pisa, would represent by the side of the heretics the contemners of religion, the three personages he chooses are Mahomet, Averroës, and the Anti-Christ. The middle age never went half-way in its hatreds. Mahomet was, all at once, a sorcerer, an infamous debauchee, a camel-stealer, a cardinal who, failing to get elected pope, invented a new religion to avenge himself on his colleagues. His biography became such a repertory of all imaginable crimes that the histories of Baphomet, like those of Pilate, were a theme for obscene anecdote.† The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries showed scarcely more justice. Bibliander, Hottinger, Maracci do not yet venture to touch the Coran except to refute it.‡

At last Prideaux and Bayle looked at Mahomet as historians, and no more as controversialists; but the want of authentic documents confined them to the discussion of the puerile fables, which up to that time had borne the brunt

* I have treated this at length in my essay on Averroës and Averroism, p. 222, &c.

† See the "Romance of Mahomet," published by MM. Reinaud and Fr. Michel, Paris, 1831, and Edal. du Ménil, "Popular Latin Poems of the Middle Ages," 1847, p. 367.

‡ We may estimate the force of their arguments by this one, which I take from the celebrated theologian Gênebrard: "Wherefore, O Mahomet, didst thou not write thy law or thine Alcoran in Latin, or Greek, or Hebrew, languages which are known all over the Roman Empire, and by all men of learning? He replies, but coldly and in Huguenot fashion, that his Alcoran or institution was not designed for the Romans or the men of learning, because they would not be converted by it. But this is not the reason; he was a beast, and knew no Hebrew, Greek, or Latin."

of popular curiosity and theological rage. The honour of the first attempt at a biography of Mahomet belongs to Gagnier. This scholar was moved to ask information of Abulfeda, and it was a fortunate thing. It is doubtful if criticism would, in the eighteenth century, have been skilful enough to make the necessary distinctions, as to historical value, between the recitals of the Arabic historians and the legends that flowered from the Persian imagination. This capital discrimination, which M. Caussin de Perceval alone has closely observed, is, in truth, the knot of all the problems relating to the origins of Islamism. Compiled from Arabic sources, such as the biographies of Ibn-Hischâm and of Abulfeda, the life of Mahomet is simple and natural, almost without miracles. Compiled from Turkish and Persian authorities, the same legend appears a mass of absurd fables in the worst possible style. Although before the Abbasides the traditions relating to the life of Mahomet were not arranged at all, the compilers of that era already relied on written sources whose authors went back for their authorities as far as the companions of the prophet. Around the mosque that was attached to Mahomet's house ran a bench, on which men without family or abiding-place took up their abode, living by the generosity of the prophet, and often eating with him. These men, who were called *benchers*, were supposed to know a great many particulars touching the person of Mahomet, and their recollections became the source of innumerable hearsays. The Mussulman faith itself was bewildered by the multitude of documents obtained in this way. Six only were recognized as legitimate sources of tradition, and the indefatigable Bokhari confesses that of the two hundred thousand memoranda he had collected, seven thousand two hundred and twenty-five only seemed to him of incontestable authenticity. European criticism might, assuredly, without incurring the reproach of rashness, institute a more rigorous sifting still. It must,

nevertheless, be confessed, that these early narratives present to us few traits of the prophet's real physiognomy, and are not distinguished very sharply from the collections of pious legends invented simply for the edification of readers. The genuine monument of the primitive history of Islamism, the Coran, remains yet absolutely unassailable; and this monument alone, independently of the recitals of historians, would suffice to reveal Mahomet to us.

I see in no literature a mode of composition that conveys an exact idea of the process by which the Coran was formed. It is neither a book written consecutively, nor a vague and indeterminate text coming by slow stages to a definite reading, nor a compilation of instructions by the Master, made from the recollections of his disciples. It is a collection of Mahomet's preachings, and, if I may venture to say so, his orders for the day, still bearing the date of the place where they appeared and the trace of the circumstances which called them out. Each of these pieces was written from the prophet's recitation,* on skins, on shoulder-blades of sheep, camels' bones, polished stones, palm-leaves, or was kept in memory by the principal disciples, who were called *bearers of the Coran*. Not till the Caliphate of Abou Bekr, after the battle of Yemâma, in which a great number of the old Mussulmans perished, was there any thought of "putting together the Coran between two ais," and of setting end to end the detached and often contradictory fragments. It is indubitable that this compilation, at which Zeyd-ben-Thabet, the most trusted of Mahomet's secretaries presided, was executed in perfectly good faith. No attempt at arrangement or reconciliation was made; the longest pieces were placed at the head; at the end were collected the shorter chapters (*suratas*), which contained

* The word *Coran* means *recitation*, and suggests no idea analogous to that of the *book* (*Kitâb*) of the Jews and Christians.

but a few lines, and the original copy was intrusted to the keeping of Hafsa, the daughter of Omar, one of Mahomet's widows. A second revisal was made under the Caliphate of Othman. Some changes in spelling and dialect had been introduced into the copies of the different provinces. Othman appointed a commission, always presided over by Zeyd, to fix definitively the text according to the dialect of Mecca. Then, by a proceeding very characteristic of Oriental criticism, he caused all the other copies to be collected together and burned, by way of cutting short discussion.

It is in this way that the Coran has come to us without essential variations. Certainly such a mode of composition is calculated to awaken some misgivings. The integrity of a work for a long time intrusted to the keeping of memory seems to us ill-secured. Might not alterations and interpolations have crept into these successive revisions? Some heretical Mussulmans have, on this point, anticipated the suspicions of modern criticism. In our own time, M. Weil maintains that Othman's edition was not purely literary, as the Arabs would have it, that politics had an interest in it, with an eye to defeat the pretensions of Ali.

Notwithstanding all this, the Coran presents itself to us with so little arrangement, in such complete disorder, with contradictions so glaring; each of the fragments that compose it has so decided an expression, that, taken altogether, its authenticity is beyond cavil. We have then, in studying Islamism, the immense advantage of possessing its original pieces, pieces strongly suspected doubtless and expressing far less the actual facts than the needs of the moment, but on this very account precious to the critic who knows how to interpret them. To this strange spectacle of a religion born in daylight, with full consciousness of itself, I would for a moment invite the attention of thinking men.

I.

Criticism as a general thing must abandon the hope of knowing anything certain about the character and the life of religious founders. In their case, the veil of legend has completely covered that of history. Were they handsome or ugly, common or sublime? No one will ever know. The books that are ascribed to them, the discourses that are put in their mouths, are ordinarily compositions of more modern date, and tell us not so much what they were as what their disciples fancied them to be. The beauty of their characters, even, is not their own; it belongs to the humanity which makes them in its image. Transformed by this incessantly creative force, the ugliest caterpillar may become the most beautiful butterfly.

Not so with Mahomet. Legend has done its work on him feebly and without originality. Mahomet is a real historical personage—we may feel of him all over. The book which has come to us bearing his name, represents nearly word for word the discourses that he made. His life is a biography like any other, without prodigies, without exaggerations. Ibn-Hischâm, and in general the oldest of his historians, are sensible writers. In tone it is very like the *Lives of the Saints*, written in a devout but reasonable style; and we could easily cite twenty legends of saints, that of Saint Francis d'Assisi for example, which have become infinitely more mythical than that of the founder of Islamism.

Mahomet declined being a wonderworker, he would be simply a prophet, and a prophet without miracles. He repeats incessantly, that he is a man like any other, mortal like any other, exposed to sin, and needing like another man the mercy of God. In his last days, wishing to set his conscience at rest, he mounts a stand: "Mussulmans," he said, "if I have struck one of you, here is my back; let him

Critics

strike me. Have I outraged any one, let him return on me injury for injury; have I deprived any of his possessions, all I have is at his disposal." A man got up and claimed a debt of three drachmas. "Better shame in this world than in the next," said the prophet, and he paid it on the spot.

This extreme moderation, this exquisite good-taste with which Mahomet took up his prophetic task, were imposed on him by the temper of his nation. Nothing could be more incorrect than the notion that the Arabs, before Islamism, were a gross, ignorant, superstitious nation; on the contrary, we must call them a nation refined, sceptical, incredulous. There is a curious episode belonging to the first period of Mahomet's mission which very well explains the icy indifference which he encountered all about him, and the extreme reserve which he was bidden to maintain in the use of the marvellous. He was seated in the square of the Caaba at a short distance from a circle formed by a number of Koreisch chiefs, all opposed to his doctrine. One of them, Otba, son of Rébia, approaches him, takes a place by his side, and speaking in the name of the rest says, —Son of my friend, thou art a man distinguished by thy qualities and thy birth. Although thou causest disturbance in thy country, divisions in families, although thou dost outrage our gods, taxest our ancestors and sages with impiety and error, we would deal discreetly with thee. Hear the propositions I have to make to thee and consider if it does not become thee to accept one of them.— Speak, said Mahomet, I listen—Son of my friend, resumed Otba, if thine object be to acquire riches, we will contribute to make thee a fortune larger than that of any of the Koreisch. If thou aspirest to honours, we will make thee our chief, and we will take no resolution without thine advice. If the spirit that haunts thee clings to thee and sways thee so that thou canst not withdraw thyself from its influence, we

will call in skilful physicians and pay them to cure thee.— I am neither greedy of property, nor ambitious of dignities, nor possessed by an evil spirit, replies Mahomet. I am sent by Allah, who has revealed to me a book and has ordered me to announce to you the rewards and punishments that await you.—Very well, Mahomet, said the Koreisch to him, since thou dost not agree to our propositions and pretendest to be sent by Allah, give us clear proofs of thy qualification. Our valley is narrow and sterile, prevail on God to enlarge it, to push back these mountain chains that shut us in, to cause rivers like those of Syria and of Irak to flow through it, or else to bring from the tomb some of our ancestors, and among them Cossay, son of Kilâb, whose word had such authority; let these illustrious dead, revived, acknowledge thee as a prophet, and we also will recognize thee.—God, replies Mahomet, has not sent me to you for that; he has sent me merely to preach his law.—At least, resumed the Koreisch, ask thy Lord to cause one of his angels to appear, and avouch thy veracity and bid us believe thee. Ask him likewise to publicly ratify the choice he has made of thy person, by relieving thee of the necessity of seeking thy daily subsistence by trade like the rest of thy fellow-countrymen.—No, says Mahomet, I will make none of these requests; my duty is only to preach.—Very well; your Lord may cause the sky to fall on us, as you pretend that he can; for we will not believe thee.”

It is clear a Bouddha, a son of God, a high-flown magician, were too high for the temperament of this people. The extreme delicacy of the Arab mind, the frank, plain way in which he takes his stand on fact, the license of morals and of beliefs that prevailed at the epoch of Islamism, forbade grand airs to the new prophet. Arabia is completely destitute of the element that engenders mysticism and mythology; for it is an abuse of terms to apply the

name of *Arab philosophy* to a philosophy which never had a root in the Arab peninsula, and the appearance of which was a reaction of the Persian against the Arabic genius. This philosophy was written in Arabic, that is all; it is Arabic neither in tendency nor spirit. The Semitic nations—those at least who remained faithful to the patriarchal life and to the ancient spirit—never included in God variety, plurality, sex; the word *Goddess* would be the most horrible barbarism in Hebrew. Hence the trait so characteristic, that they have never had a mythology or an epic. The clear and simple way in which they conceive of God as separated from the world, neither begetting nor begotten, having no peers, excluded those grand embroideries, those divine poems, in which India, Persia, Greece have shown their fancy. Mythology representing pantheism in religion, is possible only in the imagination of a people which allows the outlines of God, of humanity, and of the universe, to float loosely in the air. Now, the spirit furthest removed from pantheism is assuredly the Semitic spirit. Arabia, especially, had lost, perhaps never had, the gift of inventing the supernatural. In all the *moallakât*,* and in the vast repository of ante-Islamic poetry, we hardly find a religious thought. This people had no sense for holy things; but as compensation, it had a very lively sentiment of things finite, and of the passions of the human heart.

This is the reason why the Mussulman legend outside of Persia has remained so poor, and why the mythical element is so absolutely wanting in it. No doubt the life of Mahomet, like that of all great founders, collected fables; but these fables found no sanction except with the Schiites,

* They call *moallakât* or *suspended* the pieces of verse which had taken the prize in the poetical tourneys, and were suspended by gold nails to the door of the Caaba. Seven of them are extant, to which two or three other poems of the same character are attached.

ruled by the towering imagination of Persia. Far from clinging to the base of Islamism, they should be regarded merely as loose scoriæ, tolerated rather than consecrated, and quite analogous to the low-toned mythology of the apocryphal books, which the church has neither frankly adopted nor sternly banished. How could the popular imagination help surrounding with some prodigies an existence so extraordinary? How could the story-tellers fail to be tempted by the infancy particularly, theme so promising for legend? By their account, the night on which the prophet was born the palace of Chosroes was overthrown by an earthquake, the sacred fire of the magians went out, the lake of Sáwa dried up, the Tigris overflowed its banks, and all the idols in the world fell on their faces to the ground. These traditions, however, never attained the dignity of a consecrated legend, and, altogether, the stories of Mahomet's infancy, in spite of a few blemishes, remain a charming page of grace and nature. For the better appreciation of this sobriety, I will here give a sample of the manner in which India celebrates the birth of its heroes.

When the creatures learn that Bouddha is to be born, all the birds of the Himalaya wing their way to the palace of Kapila, and stand singing and flapping their wings on the terraces, the balustrades, the arches, the galleries, the roofs of the palace; the ponds are covered with the lotus; in the houses, the butter, the oil, the honey, the sugar, however profusely used, remain undiminished; drums, harps, lutes, cymbals give forth musical sounds without being touched; gods and hermits hasten from all the ten horizons to wait on Bouddha. The Bouddha descends accompanied by hundreds of millions of divinities. At the moment of his descent the three thousand thousand regions of the world are illuminated with an immense splendour, eclipsing that of the gods. Not a creature feels fear or

suffering; all experience an infinite content, and have none but affectionate and tender thoughts. Hundreds of millions of gods with hands, shoulders, heads, bear up the car of Bouddha. A hundred thousand *apsaras* lead the chanting choirs in the van, in the rear, on the right hand, on the left hand, and sing the praises of Bouddha. At the moment of his leaving his mother's womb all the flowers open their cups; young trees spring from the soil and unfold their buds; scented waters flow in all directions; from the sides of the Himalaya the young lions run joyfully to the town of Kapila, and stop at the gates without harming a person. Five hundred young elephants, white as snow, come, and with their trunks touch the feet of the king, the father of Bouddha; the sons of the gods, adorned with girdles, appear in the apartment of the women, coming and going from either side; the wives of the *nagas*, exposing half of their bodies, show themselves waving in the air; ten thousand daughters of the gods, with fans of the peacock's tail in their hands, are seen against the blue of the sky; ten thousand full urns appear making the circuit of the great city of Kapila; a hundred thousand daughters of the gods, with shells, drums, tambourines about their necks, stand motionless; all the winds hold their breath; all the rivers and brooks stop their flow; sun, moon, and stars cease to move; a light of a hundred thousand colours, causing happiness in body and soul, is diffused abroad; fire does not burn; from the galleries, palace, terraces, gateways, arches, are suspended pearls and precious stones; the crows, vultures, wolves, jackals cease their cries; none but sweet and soothing sounds are heard; all the gods of the woods of Salas, thrusting their bodies half-way out from the foliage, show themselves bending motionless; parasols, great and small, are displayed in the air on every side. The queen, meantime, walks in the garden of Loubini; a tree bends and salutes her; the queen seizes a branch, and look-

ing graciously towards heaven, yawns and stands motionless; the Bouddha issues from her right side without wounding her; a white lotus pierces the sod and opens to receive him; a parasol descends from heaven to cover him; a river of cold water and a river of hot water flow to him for his bath, etc.*

This may be called breaking into legend bravely; no haggling over miracle. Arabia had become, intellectually, too refined to manufacture a supernatural legend in that style. The only time that Mahomet allowed himself to indulge in an imitation of the gorgeous fancies of other religions, in the night ride to Jerusalem, on a fantastic beast, the affair turned out very ill; the story was greeted with a storm of merriment. Many of his disciples swore off, and the prophet made haste to withdraw his troublesome idea by declaring that this marvellous journey, given out at first as real, was only a dream. The whole Arabic legend of Mahomet, as it is read in Aboulfeda,† for example, is limited to a few stories of very staid invention. They try to associate him with the illustrious men of his time, and of the generation that preceded him. They represent his mission as prophesied by venerated personages. When he wandered among the solitudes in the neighbourhood of Mecca, absorbed in thought, he heard voices which said to him—“Hail, Apostle of God!” He turned, and saw nothing but trees and rocks. On his flight from Mecca he took refuge in a cavern; his enemies were about pushing in, when they perceived a nest in which a dove had deposited her eggs, and a spider’s web which closed the passage. His camel was inspired, and when the chiefs of the tribes proffering hospitality approached to take the bridle of his beast, he

* We select these traits from a thousand in the “Lalitavistara,” or legend of Bouddha, translated by M. Edward Foucaux. Paris, 1848.

† See the translation that M. Noël Desvergers has given of it. Paris, 1837.

said: "Let her go on; the hand of God guides her." His sabre, too, wrought miracles. At the close of a battle he was sitting apart, at the foot of a tree, on his knees his weapon, the hilt of which was of silver. A hostile Bedouin saw him, approached, and pretending to be attracted by a simple movement of curiosity, said to him: "Allow me to examine your sabre." Mahomet hands it to him without misgiving. The Arab takes it, draws it from the sheath, and is about to strike; but the sabre refuses to obey.

All the prodigies of his life are as transparent as this, for himself he could invent nothing very new in this line. The angel Gabriel defrayed the whole expense of his miracles; he seems to have known no other agency. The battle of Bedr alone furnishes a few examples of the high style of marvel improvised on the spot. A legion of angels fights for the Mussulmans. An Arab who had stationed himself on the surrounding mountains saw a cloud approach him, and from the bosom of the cloud he heard the neighing of steeds and a voice that said, "On, Hayzoum," that is the name of the Angel Gabriel's horse. One Mussulman tells how, pursuing a Meccan sword in hand, he saw the head of the fugitive fall to the ground before his sabre touched him; he concludes that the hand of a celestial minister had anticipated his own. Others averred that they had clearly distinguished the angels by their white turbans, one end whereof floated over the shoulder, while Gabriel, their chief, had his forehead bound about with a yellow scarf. Knowing into what state of excitement the Arabs throw themselves before and during a battle, and considering that this day was the first outburst of Mussulman enthusiasm, far from being astonished that such stories found credence, we are surprised that the brain of the combatants of Bedr gave birth to marvels as sober as these.

At a much more recent period and under the influence

of races strange to Arabia, the legend of Mahomet became mixed, I know, with wonderful circumstances, which bring it much nearer to the grand mythological legends of the high East. Persia, though subdued by Islamism, never yielded to the action of the Semitic spirit. In spite of the language and of the religion which were imposed on it, it knew how to make good its claims as an Indo-European nation, and to create for itself in the bosom of Islamism a philosophy, an epic, a mythology. Open the "Hyat ul-Koloub," a collection of Schiite traditions; you will there read that, the night when Mahomet came into the world, seventy thousand palaces of ruby and seventy thousand palaces of pearl were built in paradise, and were called palaces of the nativity. The prophet is born already circumcised; midwives of extraordinary beauty are unexpectedly present; a light whose splendour illuminates all Arabia issues with him from his mother's womb. The instant he is born he throws himself on his knees, raises his eyes to heaven, and cries: "God alone is God and I am his prophet." God clothes his apostle with the spirit of divine contentment and with the robe of sanctity, fastened by the girdle of the love of God. He is shod with respectful awe, crowned with majesty, and in his hand holds the sceptre of religious authority. At the age of three years two angels open his side, take out his heart, wring out the black drops of sin, and put in the light of prophecy. Mahomet saw behind him as well as before; his saliva sweetened the water of the sea; the drops of his sweat were like pearls. His body cast no shadow by sunlight or moonlight; no insect came near his person. There is nothing Arab in these exaggerations; they are all stamped with the Persian taste; we should completely mistake the character of the legend of Mahomet, if we looked for it in such grotesque narratives as these, which do no more harm to the purity of the primitive Arab tradition than the flat amplifications

of the apocryphal gospels do to the incomparable beauty of the canonical books.

The legendary elements of early Islamism have thus remained always in the state of scattered and unauthorized tradition. In place of a mysterious being suspended between heaven and earth, without father or brother, we have simply an Arab stained with all the defects of his national character. In place of that lofty and inaccessible rigour of supernaturalism which makes the God-Man say, "My mother, and my brethren, are those who hear the word of God and do it," we have here all the amiable weaknesses of the human heart. At the battle of Autas, a captive girl whom the Mussulmans were rudely dragging away, exclaimed, "Respect me, I am nearly related to your chief." They brought her to Mahomet. "Prophet of God," she said to him, "I am thy foster-sister; I am Schaymâ, daughter of Halimâ, thy nurse, of the tribe of Benou-Sâd." "What proof can you give me of that?" demanded Mahomet. "A bite that you gave me on the shoulder," she replied, "one day when I was carrying you on my back," and she showed the scar. The sight recalling to Mahomet the remembrance of his early childhood, and of the care that he had received in a poor family of Bedouins, moved him to tenderness. Tears wet his eyes. "Yes," said he to Schaymâ, "thou art my sister;" and stripping off his mantle he made her sit on it. Then he resumed: "If thou wilt remain henceforth with me thou shalt live tranquil and honoured among my people; if thou desirest rather to go back to thy tribe I will put thee in condition to pass thy days in ease." Schaymâ said that she preferred the desert home. And Mahomet sent her away loaded with gifts.

There is no concealment of his infirmities and humiliations. He begins by being a commission merchant in Syria, where he does a good business. No remarkable sign distinguishes him. He has his surname like any other

man ; he is called *el-Amîn*, the trusty. In his early youth he fought with the Koreisch against the Hawazin, and the Koreisch were cut to pieces as completely as if he had not been there. In a race his camel is distanced by the camel of a Bedouin, and he feels a lively chagrin thereat. Arabia has not felt obliged to exalt her prophet at the expense of humanity, or to withdraw his affections from tribe, family, and others yet humbler. The Mussulman historians tell us that he loved his horse and his camel, that he dried their sweat with his sleeve. When his cat was hungry or thirsty he rose to let her in, and he was attentive in his care of an old cock that he kept in his house as protection against the evil eye. At home he appears to us like a very respectable father of a family. Often taking by the hand Hasan and Hosein, offspring of the marriage of Ali and his daughter Fatima, he made them leap and dance, repeating to them childish phrases which have been preserved in the legend.* When he saw them, in the very midst of a preaching, he went to embrace them, placed them near him on a chair, and after a few words of apology, on the score of their innocence, resumed his discourse. After the conversion to Islamism of Bénou-Temîm, one of their principal chiefs, Cays, son of Achim, being at Medina, came into Mahomet's house one day, and found him holding on his knees a little girl whom he covered with kisses. "What sheep is this you are smelling of?" he asked. "It is my child," Mahomet answered. "Good lord!" replied Cays, "I have had a great many little girls like that: I buried them all alive without smelling one of them." "Wretch!" cried Mahomet. "God must have taken every sentiment of humanity out of thy heart; thou knowest

* I need not say that I am far from attaching historical value to these stories; I merely insist on the character which the Arabs have assigned to their prophet, and on the general complexion of the legend.

nothing of the sweetest joy it is given to man to experience."

His biographers take no more care than he took himself to hide his ruling passion. "Two things in the world," said he, "have had a charm for me—women and perfumes; but I find pure felicity only in prayer." This was the only point on which he deviated from his own laws and claimed his privilege as a prophet. Contrary to all his prescriptions, he had fifteen wives, some say twenty-five. In such a household, passages of a most delicate nature could not fail to arise. Add that the keenest jealousy seems to have been one of the traits of his character. A verse in the Coran expressly forbids his wives to marry again after his death. In his last sickness, he said to Aischa: "Would you not be content to die before me and to know that it was I that wrapped you in the shroud, that prayed over you, that laid you away in the tomb?" "I should like that well enough," replied Aischa, "if I had not an idea that on your return from my funeral you would come here and console yourself for my loss with some other of your wives." That sally often made the prophet smile.

The episode of his marriage with Maria, the Copte, is one of the most singular. A Coptic woman, a slave, a Christian, found herself preferred for many nights to the noble daughters of Abou-Bekr and of Omar, of the purest Koreisch blood. This choice raised a regular mutiny in the harem, on occasion of which God made the following revelation: "O apostle of God, wherefore, with a view to pleasing thy wives, wouldst thou abstain from that which God allows? The Lord is good and pitiful; he annuls ill considered oaths. He is thy master; he has knowledge and wisdom." Thus authorized to punish the rebels, the prophet repudiated them for one month, which he devoted wholly to Maria. It was only on the active urgency of

Abou-Bekr and of Omar that he consented to take back their daughters after he had admonished them by this other verse: "If you make opposition to the prophet, know that God declares for him. He will simply have to repudiate all of you, and the Lord will give him better wives than you are—good Mussulmans, pious, submissive, devoted."

The scandal was much more serious on occasion of the marriage of Mahomet with Zeynab. She was already married to Zeyd, the adopted son of the prophet. One day when the latter came to visit Zeyd he found Zeynab alone, and clad in light vestments which hardly concealed the beauty of her form. His emotion found vent in words: "Praise to God who disposes of hearts." He then went away; but the meaning of the exclamation did not escape Zeynab, who reported it to Zeyd. He ran straightway to tell Mahomet that he was ready to put away his wife. The prophet at first opposed his intention; but Zeyd insisted. Zeynab, said he, proud of her rank, assumed towards him a tone of haughtiness which destroyed the happiness of their union. In spite of the custom that forbade Arabs marrying the wives of their adopted sons, Zeynab a few months after this took rank among the wives of the prophet. A verse or two of the Coran silenced the murmurs of the rigid Mussulmans, and the accommodating Zeyd saw his name written in the holy book.

On the whole, Mahomet seems to us a gentle man, sensible, faithful, free from hate. His affections were sincere; his character in general was disposed to benevolence. When his hand was pressed in greeting, he responded cordially to the grasp, and never was first to withdraw his hand. He saluted little children, and showed a great tenderness of heart for women and weak persons. "Paradise," he said, "lies at mothers' feet." Neither ambitious thoughts nor religious raptures dried up in him the springs of personal feeling. Nothing could be more unlike that am-

bitious and heartless machiavellism which in stern Alexandrine verse explains its plans to Zopyrus—

“Je dcis regir en dieu l'univers prévenu ;
Mon empire est détruit, si l'homme est reconnu.”

On the contrary, the man is, at home, always unveiled. He had preserved the sobriety of the Arab manners; no air of majesty about him. His bed was a plain cloak, and hid pillow a skin filled with date leaves. He was seen milking his own ewes; and to adjust his robes and his sandals, he seated himself on the ground. His whole demeanour belies the character of adventurer and desperado, that is commonly ascribed to him. He shows himself habitually feeble, irresolute, distrustful of himself. M. Weil goes so far as to call him poltroon; it is certain that in general he advanced timidly, and almost always resisted the eagerness of his companions. His precautions in battle were quite unworthy of a prophet. He put on two coats of mail, and wore on his head a casque with a vizor that completely covered his face. At the rout of Ohod, his bearing was as unbecoming as envoy of God as it could be; thrown down in a ditch he owed his life purely to the devotion of the Ansâr, who covered him with their bodies, and he picked himself up all stained with blood and mire. His extreme caution peeps out at every step. He listened willingly to advice, and paid great deference to it. Often he evidently yielded to the pressure of public opinion, and allowed himself to be drawn into steps which his prudence censured. His disciples, having a much higher opinion of his prophetic gifts than he had; and believing in him far more than he believed in himself, could not understand these hesitations and calculations.

All the energy that was displayed in the foundation of the new religion belonged to Omar. Omar is truly the Saint Paul of Islamism, the sharp and decisive sword. There can be no doubt that the reserved nature of Maho-

met would have compromised the success of his work if he had not lighted on this impetuous disciple, always ready to draw the sword against those who did not without examination accept the religion whose most ardent persecutor he himself had been. The conversion of Omar was the decisive point in the progress of Islamism. Until then the Mussulmans had practised their religion in secret, and in public had not dared avow their faith. Omar's audacity, his ostentation in confessing himself a Mussulman, the terror he inspired, gave them courage to appear in open daylight. It seems that Mahomet had never looked beyond the horizon of Arabia, nor dreamed that his religion could be congenial to others than Arabs. The conquering principle of Islamism, the idea that the world ought to become Mussulman, is Omar's thought. He it is, who, after the death of Mahomet, ruling in reality under the name of the feeble Abou-Bekr, at the moment when the prophet's work, hardly sketched, is about falling in pieces, stops the desertion of the Arab tribes and gives to the new religion its final character of fixity. If the heat of an impetuous temperament, clinging with frenzy to a dogma, can be called faith, Omar was really the most energetic of believers. Never did man believe so fiercely; never did man spend so much rage in the name of the indubitable. We frequently see a need for hating, bring to religion such complete, decisive characters; for of all pretexts for hatred, religion is the one which men feel most security in adopting.

The rôle of prophet has always its thorns, and in the face of fellow-countrymen thus disposed to find fault with him, Mahomet must have had painful passages to traverse. He got over them generally with a good deal of adroitness, avoiding all overdoing of his part, and taking care not to venture too far. It might seem surprising that an envoy of God should be defeated, should see his anticipations baffled, should carry off half victories. In the grand super-

natural legends things are very differently managed ; there all is sharply cut, absolute, as is fitting when God takes part. It was too late to take things on so high a key ; for this reason, in the life of this last of the prophets, everything goes half-way and little by little, in an altogether human and historical fashion. He is beaten, he is deceived, he recoils, he corrects himself, he contradicts himself. Mussulmans acknowledge as many as two hundred and twenty-five contradictions in the Coran ; that is to say, two hundred and twenty-five passages which later were repealed to meet a different policy. ✓

To the features in Mahomet's life which to our eyes would be unpardonable spots on his morality, let us refrain from applying an over rigorous criticism. It is evident that most of these acts did not make on his contemporaries, and do not make on Oriental historians, the same impression they make on us. Still, it must be confessed that, on the admission of Mussulmans, Mahomet, in many cases, wrought evil with full consciousness, knowing perfectly well that he was obeying his own will, and not the inspiration of God. He permits brigandage ; he commands assassinations ; he lies and allows lying in the strategy of war. A crowd of cases could be quoted in which he palters with morality in the interest of policy. One of the most singular, surely, is that when he promises in advance to Othman plenary indulgence for all the sins he may commit till the day of his death, as compensation for a great pecuniary sacrifice. He was especially pitiless towards people that laughed. The only woman on whom he exercised severity at the taking of Mecca was the musician Ferlena, who was in the habit of singing the satirical verses that were composed against him. Very characteristic, too, is his conduct to one of his secretaries. This man, who wrote the Coran under the prophet's dictation, knew too much about the working of his inspiration for a very lively interchange of

confidence. Mahomet did not like him; he accused him of altering words and perverting ideas, so that the secretary, troubled by sinister presentiments, took flight and abjured Islamism. On the taking of Mecca, he fell again into the hands of the Mussulmans. With great difficulty his pardon was extorted from Mahomet, and when the apostate had retired, he angrily expressed his discontent that they had not delivered him from that man.

There would likewise be some injustice in judging rigorously, and in accordance with our moral ideas, those acts of Mahomet which, in our time, would be called cheats. It is impossible to imagine to what an extent conviction, and even nobleness of character, may be associated in the Mussulman with a certain degree of imposture. Did not the chief of the sect of Wahhabites, Abd-el-Wahhab, a true deist, the Socinus of Islamism, inspire his soldiers with the blindest confidence, by giving them, before the battle, a passport, signed by his own hand, and addressed to the treasurer of paradise, desiring him to admit them at sight and without question? All the founders of the *Khouan*, or religious orders of Algeria, combine the double character of ascetics and of audacious charlatans. Sidi-Aïssa, the most extraordinary of these modern prophets, Sidi-Aïssa, whose legend has reached almost the proportions of that of Mahomet, was a mere juggler and exhibitor of beasts, who was skilled in turning his trade to profit, and nobody who has travelled in Algeria will believe that the *Aïssaoua* are dupes of their own tricks.

Assuredly, it would be bad taste to compare Mahomet with impostors of this low stamp. We must, however, confess, that if the first condition of being a prophet is that a man shall cheat himself, Mahomet does not deserve that title. His whole life displays a thoughtfulness, a design, a policy, which scarcely belong to the character of an enthusiast haunted by divine visions. Never was head clearer

than his; never was man more master of his thought. We should state the question narrowly and superficially were we to ask *if Mahomet believed in his own mission*: for, in one sense, faith alone is capable of sustaining an innovator in the struggle he maintains for his chosen idea; in another sense, it is absolutely impossible to admit that a man with a tolerably clear conscience could believe that he had the seal of prophecy between his two shoulders, and that he received from the angel Gabriel the inspiration that came from his passions and from his premeditated designs. M. Weil and Mr. Washington Irving suppose, not without reason, that in the first phase of his prophetic career a truly holy enthusiasm filled his breast, and that the period of policies came later, when the struggle and the sense of difficulties to be overcome had rubbed off the first delicacy of his inspiration. The last chapters of the Coran, so glowing in poetry, must be the expression of his artless conviction, while the first chapters, loaded with disputes, with contradictions, with abuse, must be the work of his practical and reflecting age. It cannot be denied that the earliest manifestations of his prophetic genius were stamped with a grand character of saintliness. He was seen alone in prayer among the desert valleys in the environs of Mecca. Ali, son of Abou-Talib, without the knowledge of his father and uncles, sometimes went with him and prayed with him, imitating his gestures and his attitudes. One day Abou-Talib surprised them thus engaged. "What are you about?" he said to them; "what sort of religion are you practising here?" "The religion of God, of his angels, of his prophets," replied Mahomet; "the religion of Abraham." How grand he is, too, in the first trials of his apostolate! One evening, after a day passed in preaching, he entered his house without having met a single individual, man or woman, free or slave, that did not load him with insults and repel his exhortations with scorn. Beaten down, dis-

couraged, he wrapped himself in his mantle and threw himself on a mat. Then it was that Gabriel revealed to him the beautiful chapter: "O thou that envelopest thyself in a cloak, arise and preach!" Still, this perfume of sanctity appears at rare intervals only in his period of activity. Perhaps he recognized that moral sentiment and purity of soul are not sufficient in the struggle with passion and interest, and that the religious thought, from the moment it aspires to make proselytes, is obliged to borrow the often indelicate allurements of its adversaries. It seems, at least, that after having believed unreservedly in his prophetic gift, he afterwards lost his spontaneous faith, and nevertheless continued walking; guided by reflection and will, not so great as he had been; very much as Jean d'Arc resumed her womanhood as soon as she had lost her first ingenuousness. Man is too feeble to carry a divine mission long, and they only are immaculate whom God has early relieved of the burden of an apostolate.

A stranger question, perhaps, and yet one that criticism is forced to raise: To what point did the disciples of Mahomet believe in the prophetic mission of their master? It may seem strange to challenge the absolute conviction of men whom the impulse of their faith drove at the first bound to the very ends of the earth. Important distinctions, however, must be made here. In the circle of the primitive believers, among the Mohadjir and the Ansâr,* faith was, we must allow, all but absolute; but if we leave this small group, which did not number more than a few thousand men, we find Mahomet surrounded, through all the rest of Arabia, with the most undisguised incredulity. The antipathy of the Meccans towards their fellow-country-

* The Mohadjir were Meccans who attended Mahomet in his flight; the Ansâr were inhabitants of Medina who welcomed him and became his defenders against his own fellow-citizens.

man was never completely overcome. The epicureanism which prevailed among the wealthy Koreisch, the light, libertine spirit of the poets then in vogue, left no room for any profound conviction. As to the other tribes, it is certain that they embraced Islamism solely as a form, asking no questions about the doctrines they were expected to believe, and attaching no importance to them. They saw no great inconvenience in pronouncing the formula of Islam, except that of forgetting it when the prophet was gone. When Khâlid appeared among the Djadhîma and called on them to adopt the faith of the prophet, the good people knew so little what it was all about that they thought he was talking of Sabeism; and flung down their arms, crying: "We are Sabeans!" The fierce Thâkif devised a singular compromise to avoid the shame of conversion: they consented to submit to the new law on condition that they might keep their idol Lât three years. This condition being refused, they asked to be allowed to keep Lât one year,—six months,—one month. Their pride insisted on a concession. They finally brought themselves down to request an exemption from prayer. No less curious is the conversion of the Temimites. Their ambassadors presented themselves haughtily, and approaching the chambers of the prophet and his women, cried: "Come out, Mahomet; we have come to propose to you a match for glory.* We have brought our poet and orator!" Mahomet came out, and a ring was made round the players. The orator Otarid and the poet Zibrican exalted—one in rhymed prose, the other in verse—the advantages of their tribe. Cays and Hassan, sons of Thabet, answering with

* The poetical tournaments were called matches of glory, or *Moufakhara*, in which each tribe was represented by a poet charged to make good its title to preëminence. Victory rested with the tribe whose poet chose the strongest and most felicitous expressions.

improvisations in the same metre and with the same rhyme, maintained so energetically the superiority of the Mussulmans that the Temimites confessed themselves beaten. "Mahomet is truly a man favoured of heaven," said they; "his orator and poet have vanquished ours." And they became Mussulmans. All the conversions were of this kind. Conditions were made; something was given and something was received. The old Amir, son of Tofayle, having come to visit Mahomet, said to him: "What will be my rank if I embrace Islamism?" "That of other Mussulmans," replied Mahomet; "thou wilt have the same rights and the same duties as the rest." "This equality does not satisfy me. Declare me your successor in the command of the nation, and I give in my adherence to your beliefs." "It is not for me to dispose of the command when I am dead; God will give it to whom he pleases to appoint." "Very well; let us divide the power now; reign thou over the cities, over the Arabs who have fixed abodes; let me reign over the Bedouins." When Mahomet declined assenting to these conditions, Amir refused to become a Mussulman.

After the death of Mahomet especially, one may see how feeble was the conviction that gathered round him the different Arab tribes; an apostasy *en masse* had well nigh occurred. Some said that Mahomet, if he had really been sent by God, would not have died; others pretended that his religion was to last only during his lifetime. Hardly had the rumour of his approaching end got abroad than a host of prophets appeared all over Arabia; each tribe wanted to have its own—like the Koreisch; the example was contagious. Almost all these prophets, however, were but intriguing subalterns, wholly unable to take the initiative in religion. Addressing themselves to the tribes that were simple and far less refined than the Meccans, they had at command a few tricks of legerdemain which they showed

in proof of their divine mission. One of them, Moseilama, ran about the country exhibiting a phial with a narrow throat, into which he had introduced an egg by a process which he had learned of a Persian juggler. He recited also rhymed phrases which he gave out as verses of a second Coran. Who would believe it? This vile impostor for several years kept in check all the Mussulman forces banded around Abou-Bekr, and held the destiny of Mahomet in the balance. He found a formidable rival in the prophetess Sedjah, who had succeeded in collecting a powerful army of Temimites. Moseilama, hard pressed in Hadjr, saw no other means of disarming his fair rival than to propose to her a conference, which was eagerly accepted. From that conference the prophet and prophetess issued, man and wife. After three days given to Hymen, Sedjah went back to her camp, where her soldiers earnestly questioned her on the results of her interview with Moseilama.—I recognized in him, she replied, a true prophet and I have married him.—Does Moseilama present us with a nuptial gift? asked the Temimites.—He said nothing about that, Sedjah answered.—It would be a shame to thee and to us, they rejoined, that he should marry our prophetess without making us a present. Go back to him and claim for us a gift.—Sedjah went, presented herself at the gate of Hadjr, and finding it barricaded, sent a summons to her husband, who appeared on the wall. A herald made him acquainted with the demand of the Temimites.—Very good, responded Moseilama, you shall be satisfied, I charge you to publish the following proclamation: “Moseilama, prophet of God, grants absolution to the Bénou-Temîm from the first and second of the five prayers which his brother Mahomet imposed on them.”—The Temimites took the dispensation seriously, and it is contended that since then they have omitted the morning and the evening prayer.

From these recitals we may judge how little depth the religious movement had among the Arabs.* Outside of a very meagre company the movement had absolutely no dogmatic power. There is a story that after a victory Omar ordered that each soldier's share of booty should be measured by the portion of the Coran that he knew by heart. When the test was applied it was discovered that the bravest of the Bedouins could recite correctly no more than the opening statement: "In the name of God kind and merciful," which made the assistants laugh a good deal. These strong and simple natures understood nothing of mysticism. In another quarter, the Mussulman faith had found, in the rich and haughty families of Mecca, a centre of resistance over which it could not completely triumph. Abou-Sofyan, the chief of this opposition, never frankly assumed the bearing of a genuine believer. At his first interview with Mahomet, after the taking of Mecca Mahomet said to him:—Well! do you confess now that there is no God but Allah?—Oh yes, replied Abou-Sofyan. —Will you not admit also that I am the messenger of Allah?—Excuse my frankness, returned Abou-Sofyan, but on that point I still retain some doubt.—A great many pointed anecdotes testify to the tone of light scepticism and raillery which the same personage always preserved in regard to the new faith. A crowd of Meccans shared his sentiments. There was at Mecca a large class of men, witty, rich, fed on the ancient Arabic poetry, who were radically incredulous. These men had too much good taste and sagacity to make a very lively opposition to the

* The undevout character of the nomadic Arab has struck all travellers. See, in particular, M. d'Escayrac de Lature, "Le Desert et le Soudan," p. 340 etc. Certain portions of Arabia did not become Mussulman till the beginning of this century in consequence of the Wahhabite movement. Religions generally find it easier to make conquests abroad than in the land of their origin.

young sect; they embraced Islamism, retaining all the time their profane usages. It is the party of the *Mounafikoun* or make-believe Mussulmans that play so conspicuous a part in the Coran. At the battle of Honayn, where the Mussulmans were put to rout, these false brethren did not dissemble their malignant joy.—By my faith, said Calada, I think that Mahomet is at the end of his magic this time. Look at them, exclaimed Abou-Sofyan, they will run till the sea stops them.—Mahomet knew very well how far to rely on their sentiments; but like a skilful politician, he was satisfied with an outward submission, and even contrived that in the division of spoils they should be more favoured than the faithful, whom he was sure of.

The entire first century of Islamism was but a struggle between the two parties which the preaching of Mahomet raised up; on one side, the faithful group of the Mohadjir and the Ansâr; on the other side, the opposing party, represented by the family of the Omeyyades, or of Abou-Sofyan. The party of the true Mussulmans had all its strength in Omar; but after his assassination—that is to say, twelve years after the death of the prophet—the opposing party triumphed by the election of Othman, nephew of Abou-Sofyan, Mahomet's most dangerous enemy. The whole Khalifate of Othman was a reaction against the prophet's friends, who were excluded from the administration of affairs and violently persecuted. They never recovered supremacy after that. The provinces could not endure that the little aristocracy of the Mohadjir and the Ansâr clustered together in Mecca and Medina should claim for itself alone the right to elect the Khalif. Ali, the genuine representative of the primitive tradition of Islamism, was all his life an impracticable man, and his election was never cordially acquiesced in by the provinces. From all quarters hands were outstretched to the Omeyyade family, which had become Syrian in habits and interests. Now,

the orthodoxy of the Omeyyades was gravely suspected. They drank wine, they practised the pagan rites, made no account of tradition, of the Mussulman manners, or of the sacred character of the friends of Mahomet. This explains the astonishing spectacle presented by the first generation of the Hegyra, which was completely occupied in exterminating the primitive Mussulmans, the true fathers of Islamism. Ali, the saintliest of men, the adopted son of the prophet; Ali, whom Mahomet had proclaimed his vicar, is pitilessly butchered. Hoseim and Hassan, his sons, whom Mahomet had held on his knees and covered with kisses, are butchered. Ibn-Zobéir, the first-born of the Mohadjir, who received as his first nutriment the saliva of the apostle of God, is butchered. The primitive believers, collected about the Caaba, continue the Arab life there, passing the day talking in the square and marching in procession round the black stone; but they have lost their power utterly, and the Omeyyades never heed them till they think they can force them into their sanctuaries. It was a strange scandal, that last siege of Mecca, when the Mussulmans of Syria were seen setting fire to the coverings of the Caaba, and making it crumble under the dint of their cross-bows. It is said that when the first stone was hurled against the holy building the roll of thunder was heard; the Syrian soldiers trembled; "On, on!" shouted their chief; "I know the climate of this country; storms are very frequent at this season." At the same time seizing the cords of the balista, he worked them himself.

From all sides, then, we come to this singular result: that the Mussulman movement was started almost without religious faith; that, setting aside a small number of faithful disciples, Mahomet really wrought very little conviction in Arabia, and that he never succeeded in breaking down the opposition represented by the Omeyyade party. This party, at first repressed by the energy of Omar, after the

death of that terrible believer decidedly carries all before it, and causes Othman to be elected; this party opposes an invincible resistance to Ali, and at last sacrifices him to its hate; this party, finally, triumphs by the accession of the Omeyyades, and goes on to slaughter, even in the Caaba, the last remnant of the primitive and pure generation. Hence, also, the indefiniteness in which all the dogmas of the Mussulman faith were floating as late as the twelfth century; hence that bold philosophy which proclaimed without evasion the sovereign rights of reason; hence those numerous sects sometimes bordering on open and avowed infidelity: Karmathians, Fatimites, Ismaelites, Druses, Haschischins, Zendika, secret sects with double faces, allying fanaticism with incredulity, license with religious enthusiasm, the audacity of the free thinker with the superstition of the initiate. Not till the twelfth century did Islamism really triumph over the undisciplined elements which fermented in its bosom, and then it triumphed by the accession of the Ascharite theology, more severe in its methods, and by the violent extermination of philosophy. Since that epoch not a doubt has sprung up, not a protest has been raised in the Mussulman world. The labour incident to the creation of religions is laid entirely on the first generation of believers, who furnish the necessary ground of support for the credence of the future. The faith is the work of time, and the cement of religious edifices becomes hard with age.

II.

Human nature, taken as a whole, being neither all good nor all bad, neither quite holy nor quite profane, the offence to criticism is the same, whether the religious movements of humanity are traced back to the play of passion

and of individual interest, or to the exclusive action of higher motives. A revolution as thorough as Islamism could not have been the fruit of an adroit combination, and Mahomet is no more to be explained on the theory of imposture and deceit than on that of illumination and enthusiasm. To the eyes of the logician, who places himself at an abstract point of view, and opposes truth and falsehood to one another as absolute categories, there is no middle term between the impostor and the prophet. But to the eye of the critic, who places himself in the shifting and intangible centre of reality, nothing that proceeds from man is pure; everything carries its original stain by the side of its seal of beauty. Who can indicate the line that separates, in his own moral sensations, the lovely from the hateful, ugliness from beauty, the angelic vision from the satanic, or even, on a certain plane, joy from grief? Religions being the most complete works of human nature, those which express it most harmoniously share in the contradictions of this nature, and exclude simple and absolute judgments. To think of applying strictly to these capricious phenomena the scholastic categories, to judge them by the plummet of the casuist, drawing a deep line between the wisdom and the folly, is to misconceive their nature. All goes on like a mirage in those Walpurgis nights, those grand Sabbaths of all the passions and instincts. The holy and the infamous, the charming and the hideous, the apostle and the juggler, heaven and hell, grasp hands, like the visions of a troubled sleep, when all the images hidden in the folds of fancy one after the other take form.

I have dwelt at length on the native infirmity of Islamism; it would be unjust not to add that no religion and no institution could stand the test to which we can subject this one. What prophet could hold his own against criticism, if criticism followed him into his closet, as ours does? Happy they whom mystery covers, and who fight en-

trenched behind the cloud! Perhaps, too, our age has over-worked the term spontaneity in explaining phenomena which neither the experience of the present nor the testimonies of history will enable us to comprehend. Through reaction against a school that exaggerated the creating power of the reflecting faculties, that regarded language, religions, and moral beliefs, the primitive poesy, as the fruit of deliberate invention, we, it seems, are too much inclined to believe that all idea of composition is to be excluded from the primitive poems, and all idea of imposture from the formation of the grand legends. Instead of saying that languages, beliefs, and popular poems made themselves, it would be more correct to say that nobody saw them made. The spontaneous is, perhaps, simply the obscure; for here is the only religion whose beginnings are clear and historical, and in these beginnings we find a great deal of reflection, of deliberation, of combination. God forbid that in any case I should do injury to the majesty of the past! When criticism applies itself for the first time to a fact or to a book which has captivated the minds of many generations, it is almost always discovered that admiration has been misleading; a thousand artifices are seen, a thousand retouches, a thousand dashes which destroy the grand impression of beauty or of sanctity that had seduced the uncritical ages. What a day in the fortunes of Homer that was when the unlucky Scholia of Venice came to show us the pencil-marks of Zenodotus and Aristarchus, and to introduce us, as it were, to the committee by whom was elaborated the poem which down to that time had seemed the most direct emanation, the most limpid jet of personal genius! Must we say that criticism has destroyed Homer? We might as well say that progress in philosophy and in æsthetics has destroyed antiquity, because it has demonstrated the nothingness of certain charms, long excessively relished, of which antiquity was perfectly innocent. As

well might we say that exegesis has destroyed the Bible, because in place of the blunders of the vulgate it has disclosed to us a literature sparkling with originality.

Criticism displaces admiration, but does not destroy it. Admiration is an act essentially synthetic; not by dissecting a lovely body do we discover its loveliness; not by microscopic examination of the events of history and the works of the human mind do we learn their high character. It may be affirmed that if we were to see the origin of the great transactions of the past as near as the miserable agitations of the present, all prestige would vanish, and there would remain nothing to adore; but should we not also seek the eternal beauty in this lower region of individual inconstancy and feebleness? Things are beautiful only through that which humanity sees in them, through the feelings it attaches to them, the symbols it draws from them. It is this that calls forth those absolute tones which have no existence in fact. The reality is complex, mixed of good and evil, at once admirable and censurable,—deserving of love and of hate. But that which carries away the homage of humanity is simple, spotless, admirable altogether. The critic exclusively occupied with the truth, having no fears of consequences, since he knows that the results of his researches do not penetrate to the regions where illusion is necessary, has it in charge to correct the mistakes with which humanity scarcely troubles itself. He does not exaggerate the importance of this commission. Indeed what matters it if humanity in its admiration does commit errors in history, if it does make the men it has adopted more beautiful and pure than they actually were? Its homage is no less meritorious for that, for being paid to the beauty it supposes them to have and has itself given to them. From the strictly historical point of view the scholar alone has a right to admire; but from the moral point of view the ideal belongs to all. Sentiments

have their value apart from the reality of the object that excites them, and it is doubtful if humanity ever shares the scruples of the learned who will admire nothing till they know exactly what it is.

After having done justice to the portion of clay in the work of the founder of Islamism, I ought now to indicate wherein this work was holy and legitimate, that is to say, wherein it answered to the deepest instincts of human nature, and in particular to the needs of Arabia in the seventh century.

Hitherto, Islamism has appeared in history as an attempt perfectly original and unprecedented. It was an almost prescribed ceremony to introduce Mahomet as the founder of the civilization, of the monotheism, and even (for an error so grave as this has been indefinitely repeated) of the literature of the Arabs. Now, it may be said that the Arab genius, far from beginning with Mahomet, finds in him its last expression. I know not in the whole history of civilization a picture more gracious, more attractive, more animated than that of Arab life before Islamism as it is exhibited to us in the *Moallakât*, and above all in that admirable type of Antar; boundless freedom of the individual, complete absence of law and of force, an exalted sentiment, life wandering and chivalrous, fancy, gaiety, archness, light and sensuous poetry, refinement of tone. Now, this delicate flowering of the Arab life ended precisely on the advent of Islamism. The last poets of the grand school go out resisting to the utmost the newly born religion. Twenty years after Mahomet, Arabia is humbled, outstripped by its conquered provinces. A hundred years after, the Arab genius is completely effaced; Persia triumphs through the accession of the Abassides; Arabia disappears for ever from the world's stage, and while her language and her religion are carrying civilization from Malacca to Morocco, from Timbuctoo to Samarcand,

she, forgotten, driven back into her deserts, relapses into what she was in the time of Ishmael. Thus in the life of races there is one early, sudden resplendence of conscience, a divine moment, when, prepared by a slow interior evolution, they come to the light, produce their master-piece, then fade out as if this grand effort had exhausted their fertility.

Mahomet is no more the founder of monotheism than of civilization and literature among the Arabs. The conclusion from numberless facts noted for the first time by M. Caussin de Perceval, is that Mahomet only followed the religious movement of his time instead of leading it. Monotheism, the worship of Allah the supreme (Allah ta'ala), seems to have been always the basis of the Arab religion. The Semitic race never conceived of the government of the universe, otherwise than as an absolute monarchy. Its theodicy has made no progress since the Book of Job; the sublimities and the aberrations of polytheism have always been foreign to it. Some superstitions stained with idolatry, which varied from tribe to tribe, had nevertheless spoiled the purity of the patriarchal religion among the Arabs, and in presence of religions more powerfully organized, all the enlightened minds of Arabia were aspiring after a better worship. A people hardly arrives at a conception of the insufficiency of its religious system till it has foreign relations, and the epochs of religious creation ordinarily follow the epochs when races have intermingled. Now, in the sixth century, Arabia, till then inaccessible, is opened at every point; Greeks, Syrians, Persians, Abyssinians, pour into it all at once. The Syrians carry thither writing; the Abyssinians and the Persians rule by turns in Yemen and Bahren. Many tribes acknowledged the sovereignty of the Greek Emperors, and received from them a local governor. Perhaps the most singular episode in the ante-Islamic history is

that of the prince-poet Imroulcays who came to seek an asylum in Constantinople, engaged in an amorous intrigue with the daughter of Justinian, sang her praises in Arabic verse, and died poisoned by the secret orders of the Court of Byzantium. The diversity of religions fostered likewise in Arabia a singular activity of ideas. Whole tribes had embraced Judaism; Christianity numbered considerable churches at Nedjran, in the kingdoms of Hira and of Ghassan. Everywhere, religion was the subject of discussion. A curious monument of these controversies is preserved for us in the dispute of Gregentius, Bishop of Zhefar, with the Jew Herban. Finally, a kind of vague tolerance and jumble of all the Semitic religions got established; the ideas of the one God, of paradise, of resurrection, of prophets, of sacred books, insinuated themselves by slow degrees even among the pagan tribes. The Caaba became the pantheon of all worships; when Mahomet expelled the images from the holy house, among the banished gods was a Byzantine virgin painted on a column, holding her child in her arms.

This great religious travail betrayed itself outwardly by significant facts which announced an approaching birth. A crowd of men dissatisfied with the ancient worship set out on the search for a better religion, trying one after another the different faiths that were extant, and in despair of success, creating each for himself a religion in harmony with their own moral deeds. Every religious phenomenon is thus preceded by a sort of vague unrest and anticipation which, in a few privileged souls, manifests itself in presentiment and desire. Islamism had its John the Baptist and its aged Simeon. It was the same in the case of Buddhism. At the sight of the marvellous apparitions which accompanied the birth of the Bouddha, an anchorite of the Himalaya, possessing the fire transcendent sciences, comes to Kapila, through the air, takes the child in his

arms, and recognizes in it the thirty-two signs of the grand man, and the eighty marks of the Bouddha. Some years before the preaching of Mahomet, while the Koreischites were celebrating the feast of one of their idols, four men more enlightened than the rest of their nation met apart from the crowd and communicated to each other their thoughts. "Our fellow countrymen," said they among themselves, "are walking in a false way; they have strayed from the religion of Abraham. What is this pretended divinity to which they sacrifice victims, and round which they make solemn processions? Let us seek for the truth, and to find it, let us quit our country if we must, and explore strange lands." The four personages who formed this project were Waraca, son of Naufal, Othman, son of Howayrith, Obeydallah, son of Djahsch, and Zeyd, son of Amr.

Waraca, in his frequent intercourse with the Christians and the Jews, had picked up instruction superior to that of his fellow-citizens. Adopting a very prevalent belief he was persuaded that a messenger from God was soon to appear on the earth, and that this messenger was to come from the Arab nation. He had acquired a knowledge of the Hebrew Scripture, and read the holy books. Khadidja, his cousin, having related to him her husband's first vision, he declared that Mahomet was the prophet of the Arabs, and predicted the persecutions that he should endure. Soon after he died, having caught but a slight glimpse of the dawn of Islamism.

Othman, son of Howayrith, set off on his travels, questioning all from whom he hoped to gain information. Some pious Christians excited in him a taste for the faith of Jesus Christ. He presented himself at the Court of the Emperor of Constantinople, and there received baptism. Obeydallah, son of Djahsch, after fruitless efforts to get at the religion of Abraham, remained in uncertainty and doubt, till the moment that Mahomet began his preaching. At first he

thought he recognized in Islamism the true religion he was in search of; but very soon he abandoned it, to devote himself finally to Christianity. As to Zeyd, son of Amr, he repaired every day to the Caaba and prayed God to enlighten him. He was seen, his back leaning against the wall of the temple, absorbed in pious meditation, which he came out of, crying, "Lord! if I knew in what way thou wouldest be served and adored, I would obey thy will; but I do not know." Then he prostrated himself on his face, to the earth. Adopting neither the ideas of the Jews nor those of the Christians, Zeyd made a religion for himself, trying to conform to what he believed to have been the worship of Abraham. He rendered homage to the unity of God, publicly attacked false divinities, and declaimed energetically against superstitious practices. Persecuted by his fellow-citizens, he took flight and travelled over Mesopotamia and Syria, everywhere consulting the men who were devoted to religious studies in the hope of recovering the religion of the patriarchs. A learned Christian monk to whom he had attached himself, informed him, they say, of the appearance of an Arab prophet who preached the religion of Abraham in Mecca. Zeyd made haste on his way to go and hear the apostle; but he was stopped on the road by a band of robbers, pillaged, and put to death.

Thus, in all quarters there was the presentiment of a great religious renovation; in all quarters people were saying that Arabia's time was come. Prophecy is the form that all the great revolutions among the Semitic people assume, and, to tell the truth, prophecy is but the necessary consequence of the monotheistic system. Primitive people, ever thinking themselves in immediate relations with Deity, and viewing the great events of the physical and moral order as effected by the direct action of higher beings, have had but two conceptions of God's influence on the government of the universe; either the divine

force takes flesh in a human form,—this is the Indian *Avatar*,—or God chooses for his organ a privileged mortal,—this is the *Nabi*, or Semitic prophet. Indeed, the Semitic system so widens the distance from God to man that the communication from one to the other can be effected only by an interpreter, remaining always perfectly distinct from the being who inspires him. To say that Arabia was to enter on an era of great things was consequently to say that it was to have its prophet, like the other Semitic families. Many individuals, anticipating the fulness of time, believed, or pretended to believe, that they were the prophet announced. Mahomet grew up in the midst of this movement. His journeys into Syria, his intercourse with the Christian monks, and perhaps the personal influence of his uncle Waraca, so well versed in the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures, had early initiated him into all the religious perplexities of his age. He could neither read nor write, but the biblical histories had reached him through the narratives which had made a lively impression on his mind, and which, dwelling in his memory as vague recollections, left full liberty to his imagination. The reproach that has been cast on Mahomet of having altered the biblical narratives is wholly misdirected. Mahomet took these recitals as they were given to him, and the narrative portion of the Coran is simply the reproduction of rabbinical traditions and of the apocryphal gospels. The "Gospel of the Infancy," in particular, which was very early translated into Arabic, and which has been preserved only in that language, had acquired an immense importance among the Christians of the remote regions of the East, and had almost obliterated the canonical gospels. It is certain that the stories we speak of were among Mahomet's most potent means of influence. Nadhr, son of Hârith, undertook sometimes to compete with him. He had resided in Persia, and knew the legends of the ancient

kings of that country. When Mahomet, collecting about him a circle of hearers, presented to them features in the life of the patriarchs and prophets, examples of the divine vengeance as having fallen on impious nations, Nadhr took up the word after him, and said: "Hear now something that is much better worth listening to than those matters which Mahomet has been entertaining you with." Then he recounted the most astonishing incidents in the heroic history of Persia, the marvellous exploits of the heroes Roustem and Isfendiâr, adding: "Are the narratives of Mahomet finer than mine? He retails to you old legends that he has collected from the lips of men wiser than he, just as I have gathered up in my voyages and committed to writing the stories I have told you."

Long before Islamism the Arabs had adopted the traditions of the Jews and Christians to explain their own origin. The legend by which the Arabs connected themselves with Ishmael has often been regarded as possessing a historical value, and furnishing a powerful confirmation of the Biblical narratives. This, in the eyes of a severe criticism, is inadmissible. It cannot be doubted that the biblical reputations of Abraham, Job, David, Solomon, began with the Arabs towards the fifth century. The Jews (*book people*) had till then kept the archives of the Semitic race, and the Arabs willingly confessed their superiority in erudition. The *book* of the Jews spoke of the Arabs, attributed to them a genealogy; nothing more was necessary to induce them to accept it with confidence; such is the prestige of written texts among artless people, always eager to attach themselves to the beginnings of more civilized people. They say that at the period when Mahomet began to attract attention, the Meccans had an idea of sending deputies to Medina to ask the rabbins of that city what they were to think of the new prophet. The deputies depicted the person of Mahomet to the doc-

tors, gave them some exposition of his discourses, and added: "You are wise men who read books; what think you of this man?" The doctors replied: "Ask him: Who were certain young people in times past, whose story is a marvel? What personage is there who hath reached the limits of the earth, East and West? What is the soul? If he answers these three questions in such and such a way, he is verily a prophet. If he answers otherwise, or if he cannot answer, he is an impostor." Mahomet resolved the first enigma by the story of the Seven Sleepers which was popular in all the East; the second by Dhoul-Carnayn, a fabulous conqueror who is no other than the legendary Alexander of the Pseudo-Callisthenes; when it came to the third he made, alas! perhaps all the reply one can make; "The soul is a thing the knowledge of which is reserved to God. To man is granted the possession of a very feeble glimmer of knowledge."

The dogmatic portion of Islamism supposes still less of genius than the legendary portion. Mahomet was completely destitute of invention in this sense. A stranger to the refinements of mysticism, he could establish none but a very simple religion, limited on all sides by common sense, timid like everything born of reflection, narrow like everything in which the sentiment of the real predominates. The dogma of Islamism, at least previous to the comparatively modern invasion of theological subtleties, hardly goes beyond the simplest positions of natural religion. No pretension to the transcendental, none of those bold paradoxes of supernaturalism in which the fancy of the races endowed with the sense of the infinite disports itself with so much originality, no priesthood, no worship beyond the act of prayer. All the ceremonies of the Caaba, the circuits in procession, pilgrimage, the *omra*, the sacrifices in the valley of Mina, the thronging to

mount Arafat, were established in all their details long before Mahomet.

Pilgrimage especially had from time immemorial been an essential element of Arab life; it was what the Olympic games were to Greece, the national assemblage, at once religious, commercial, poetic. The valley of Mecca had thus become the central point of Arabia, and in spite of the division and the rivalry of the tribes, the supremacy of the family that guarded the Caaba was implicitly acknowledged. It was a serious movement, and one that made almost an era in the history of the Arabs, when a bolt was put on the sacred house. From that time authority attached to the possession of the keys of the Caaba. The Koreisch Cossay having intoxicated the Khosaité Abou-Ghobshan, keeper of the keys, bought them of him, says the legend, for a bottle of wine, and thus founded the metropolitan authority of his tribe. From this moment begins the grand movement for the organization of the Arab nation. Until then, people had only ventured to set up tents in the sacred valley; Cossay gathered the Koreisch there, reconstructed the Caaba, and was the true founder of the City of Mecca. All the most important institutions date from Cossay; the *nadwa*, or central council sitting at Mecca; the *liwa*, or flag; the *rifada*, or alms designed to pay the pilgrims' expenses; the *sicaya*, or superintendence of the waters, a most important office in a country like the Hedjaz; the *nasaa*, or intercalation of complementary days in the calendar; the *hidjaba*, or keeping of the keys of the Caaba. These functions, which included the whole political and religious institution of Arabia, were exclusively reserved to the Koreisch. Thus by the middle of the fifth century the germ of centralization in Arabia is already planted, and the point whence the religious and political organization of this country was to start, is indicated in advance. Cossay, in one sense, esta-

blished much more than Mahomet. He was even regarded as a sort of prophet, and his will passed for an article of religion.

Hâschem, in the first half of the sixth century, completed the work of Cossay, and extended in a surprising manner the commercial relations of his tribe; he established two caravans, one in the winter to Yemen, the other in the summer to Syria. Abd-el-Mottalib, son of Hâschem, and grandfather of Mahomet, continued the traditional work of the Koreisch oligarchy by the discovery of the well of Zemzem, the fountain which, according to Arab legend, God caused to gush up in the desert to quench Ishmael's thirst. The well of Zemzem, independently of the tradition that was attached to it, was a very important point in a valley arid, and as much frequented as that of Mecca, and assured preeminence to the family that appropriated it. The tribe of Koreisch found itself, in this way, raised, like the tribe of Judah among the Hebrews, to the rank of a privileged tribe destined to accomplish the unity of the nation. Mahomet then did but crown the work of his ancestors; in politics as in religion he invented nothing, but he carried out with energy the aspirations of his age. It remains to inquire what auxiliaries he found in the eternal instincts of human nature, and how he was able to give to his work an immoveable basis while relying on the frailties of the heart.

Independent of all dogmatic belief there are in man religious needs from which incredulity itself cannot withdraw us. It is astonishing sometimes that a religion can live so long after the structure of its dogma has been undermined by criticism; but, in reality, a religion is neither founded nor overthrown by arguments; it has its ground of being in the most imperious needs of our nature, the need of loving, the need of suffering, the need of believing. This is the reason why woman is the essential element in all religious

foundations. Christianity has literally been founded by women.* Islamism, which is not precisely a *holy* religion, but rather a natural, serious, liberal religion, a religion of men, in a word, has, I confess, nothing comparable to the admirable types of Magdalen, of Thecla; nevertheless, this cold and reasonable religion had seduction enough to fascinate the devout sex. Nothing is more incorrect than the idea generally diffused in the West touching the condition assigned to woman by Islamism; the Arab women, in the time of Mahomet, in no wise resembled the stupid creatures that people the harem of the Ottomans. In general, the Arabs, it is true, had a poor opinion of the moral qualities of women, because the characteristics of woman are exactly the opposite of those which the Arabs regard as peculiar to the perfect man. We read in the *Kitâb-el-Aghâni* that a chief of the tribe of Jaschkor, named Moschamradj, having in an excursion against the Temimites, carried off a young girl of noble family, the uncle of the young girl, Cays, son of Acim, went to reclaim her of Moschamradj, offering him at the same time a ransom. Moschamradj having given to the captive her choice to remain with him or to be sent back to her family, the girl, who was enamoured of her ravisher, preferred him to her kindred. Cays went home, so stupefied and indignant at the weakness of a sex capable of making such a choice, that on coming to his tribe he caused to be buried alive two daughters of tender age that he had, and swore that he would treat likewise all the daughters that might be born to him in the future. These simple and loyal natures could not comprehend the passion that raises woman above the exclusive affection for the tribe; they could not regard her

* See the fine studies of M. Saint-Mark-Girardin on the part taken by women in the beginning of Christianity in his "*Essais de littérature et de morale*," t. II.

otherwise than as a subordinate creature, without individuality. There were women who were mistresses of themselves, enjoyed their own property, chose their own husband, and had the right to dismiss him when they thought good. Many were distinguished for their poetical talent, and for their literary tastes. Had not one woman, the beautiful El-Khansâ, striven gloriously with the most celebrated poets of the great century? Others made their houses the resorts of literary men and people of wit.

Mahomet, in raising still higher the condition of a sex whose charms touched him so keenly, was not rewarded by ingratitude. The sympathy of women contributed not a little to console him, in the early period of his mission, for the affronts he received; they saw him persecuted, and they loved him. The first century of Islamism presents many examples of truly remarkable women. Next to Omar and Ali, the two principal figures of this epoch are those of two women, Aischa and Fatima. A halo of sanctity burns about Khadidja, and it is indeed a highly honourable testimony in Mahomet's favour, that, by a fact unique in the history of prophecy, his divine mission should have been first recognized by her who must have been best acquainted with his weaknesses. When at the outset of his preaching, accused of imposture and battling with scoffers, he came to confide to her his troubles, she consoled him with tender words and rebuilt his shattered faith. Khadidja, therefore, was never confounded in the memory of Mahomet with the other wives who succeeded her. The story goes, that one of these latter, jealous of so much constancy, having one day asked the prophet if Allah had not given him something that would make him forget the old Khadidja, he answered: "No; when I was poor she made me rich; when others accused me of falsehood she believed in me; when I was cursed by my nation she remained faithful to me, and the more I suffered the more she loved

me." Later, when one of his wives wished to gain his good graces, she began by eulogizing Khadidja.

The touchstone of a religion, next to its women, are its martyrs. The fact is that persecution is the first of religious delights. It is so sweet to the heart of man to suffer for his faith, that the sweetness of it has sometimes been sufficient to make believers. The consciousness of Christendom understood this marvellously well when it created those admirable legends that tell of so many conversions wrought by the charm of suffering. Islamism, though it always remained a stranger to this depth of sentiment, also reached, now and then, very lofty traits in its stories of martyrs. The slave Belâl should have his place among the touching heroes of the "Golden Legend." In the Mussulman's eyes they are the true martyrs who have perished fighting for true religion. Although there is in this a confusion of ideas which we cannot applaud, the soldier's death and the martyr's producing in us entirely different sensations, the Mussulman genius has succeeded in surrounding its dead with a very noble poetry. That was a beautiful and grand scene, for example, that was exhibited at the funeral obsequies after the battle of Ohod. "Bury them without washing off their gore!" cried Mahomet; "they shall appear on the day of resurrection with their bloody wounds, which will exhale the odour of musk, and I will bear witness that they have died martyrs to the faith." The standard-bearer Djafir had his two hands cut off, and fell pierced with ninety wounds, all received in front. Mahomet carries this news to his widow. He takes the young son of the martyr on his knees and strokes his head in a way that tells the whole story to the mother. "His two hands have been cut off," said he, "but in exchange God will give him two wings of emerald, with which he is now flying whithersoever he will among the angels of paradise."

The conversions are also in general managed with great

skill. Almost all of them remind us of St. Paul's. The persecutor becomes the apostle; the victim, worked up to the paroxysm of his rage, receives the final blow that stretches him, full length, at the feet of triumphant grace. The legend of the conversion of Omar is, in this regard, an incomparable page of religious psychology. Omar had been the bitterest enemy of the Mussulmans. The terrible fury that was his characteristic had made him the bugbear of the timid believers, and driven them to their hiding-places. One day, in a moment of transport, he went out with the fixed intention of killing Mahomet. On the way he meets Noaym, one of his kindred, who seeing him thus, sabre in hand, asks him whither he is going, and what he proposes to do. Omar discloses his design. "Thou art carried away by passion," says Noaym to him, "why dost thou not rather turn thy thoughts towards the correction of the persons of thine own family, who have, unknown to thee, abjured the faith of their fathers?" "And these members of my family, who are they?" says Omar. "Thy brother-in-law, Said, and thy sister, Fatima," replies Noaym. Omar flies to the house of his sister. Said and Fatima were at that moment receiving secret instructions from a disciple, who was reading to them a chapter from the Coran, written on a leaf of parchment. At the noise of Omar's steps the catechist hides himself in a dark corner. Fatima slips the leaf under her robe. "What's that I heard you reciting in a low voice?" said Omar, coming in. "Nothing; thou art deceived." "You were reading something, and I have heard that you are connected with the sect of Mahomet." Saying these words, Omar throws himself on his brother-in-law. Fatima would cover him with her body, and both exclaim: "Yes, we are Mussulmans! We believe in God and his prophet. Murder us, if thou wilt." Omar, striking blindly, smote, and severely wounded his sister Fatima. At the sight of a woman's

blood shed by his hands, the impetuous young man was all at once softened. "Show me the writing that you were reading," said he, with an apparent calmness. "I am afraid," replied Fatima, "that thou wilt tear it in pieces." Omar swore to return it uninjured. Hardly had he read the first lines: "How beautiful that is!" he exclaimed. "How sublime! Show me where the prophet is; I go on the instant to give myself up to him." Mahomet was at that moment in a house situated on the hill of Safa, with forty of his disciples, to whom he was unfolding his doctrine. There is a knock at the door. One of the Mussulmans looks out of the window. "It is Omar, with a sabre by his side," he said, with terror. The consternation was general. Mahomet bids them open the door; he advances towards Omar, takes him by his cloak, and drawing him into the middle of the circle, says to him: "What motive brings thee, son of Khattâb? Wilt thou persist in thine impiety till the chastisement of heaven falls upon thee?" "I come," Omar responded, "to declare myself a believer in God and his prophet." The whole assembly returned thanks to heaven for this unhopèd for conversion.

On quitting the faithful, Omar went directly to the house of a certain Djémil, who passed for the greatest gossip in Mecca. "Djémil," said he, "hear a piece of news. I am a Mussulman; I have adopted the religion of Mahomet." Djémil made haste to the square of the Caaba, where the Koreisch were assembled in conference. He arrived, bawling at the top of his voice: "The son of Khattâb is perverted!" "Thou liest!" said Omar, who followed him closely; "I am not perverted, I am a Mussulman. I confess that there is no God but Allah, and that Mahomet is his prophet." His provocations in the end made the miscreants furious, and they threw themselves upon him. Omar bore the onset, and beating back his assailants, "by God," he shouted, "if there were only three hundred Mus-

sulmans of us, we soon should see who would remain masters of the temple!" This is the same man who later could not understand how people could transact business with infidels; and who, issuing, sabre in hand, from the house where he had just seen Mahomet expire, declared that he would break the head of anybody who should dare to say that the prophet could die.

Finally, by his marvellous acquaintance with Arab æsthetics, Mahomet created for himself an omnipotent engine of power over a people infinitely sensitive to the charm of fine language. The Coran was the sign of a literary revolution, as well as of a revolution in religion; it signalizes among the Arabs the transition from the versified style to prose, from poetry to eloquence, crisis so important in the intellectual life of a people. At the beginning of the seventh century the grand poetic age of Arabia was passing away; traces of fatigue showed themselves in all quarters; the ideas of literary criticism appeared as a sign of ill omen for genius. Antar, that Arab nature so frank, so unspoiled, begins his *Moallakât*, very much as a poet of the *decadence* might, with these words: "What theme have not the poets sung?" An immense astonishment greeted Mahomet when he appeared in the midst of an exhausted literature, with his vivid and earnest recitations. The first time that Otba, son of Rébia, heard this energetic language, sonorous, full of rhythm, though unversified, he went back to his friends quite astonished. "What is the matter?" they asked. "By my faith!" he replied, "Mahomet has used towards me speech such as I never heard. It is neither poetry, nor prose, nor the language of the magician, but it is penetrating." Mahomet did not like the exceedingly refined prosody of Arab poetry; he committed faults of quantity when he quoted verses, and God himself took the responsibility of excusing him from it in the Coran. "We have not taught our

prophet versification." He repeats on all occasions that he is neither a poet nor a magician. The common people, in fact, were continually tempted to confound him with these two classes of men; and it is true that his rhymed and sententious style had some resemblance to that of the magicians. It is impossible for us, forsooth, to comprehend the charm that the Coran exerted immediately on its appearance. The book seems to us declamatory, monotonous, tedious; the continuous reading of it is almost insupportable; but it must be remembered that Arabia, having never possessed an idea of the plastic arts, or of high beauties of composition, makes perfection of form consist exclusively in the details of style. Language in its view is something divine; the most precious gift that God has made to the Arab race. The most certain sign of its pre-eminence is the Arab language itself, with its learned grammar, its infinite wealth, its subtle delicacy.* It cannot be doubted that Mahomet owed his chief success to the originality of his language, and to the novel turn he gave to Arab eloquence. The most important conversions, that of the poet Lébid, for example, are wrought through the effect of certain fragments of the Coran; and to those who demanded a "sign"† of him Mahomet offers no other response than the perfect purity of his Arab speech, and the fascination of the new style of which he had the secret.

Thus, Islamism, with a completeness of which it would be hard to find another example, sums up the ideas, moral, religious, æsthetic, in a word, the spiritual life of one great

* The Arabs fancy that their language alone has a grammar, and that all other idioms are but vulgar dialects. The Scheick Rifaa, in the narrative of his travels in France, takes great pains to destroy this prejudice of his fellow-countrymen, and assures them that the French language also has rules, refinements, and an academy.

† The word *aiat*, which designates the verses of the Coran, means "sign" or "miracle."

family of mankind. We need not ask from it either the loftiness of spirituality which India and Germany alone have been acquainted with, or the feeling of proportion, and of perfect beauty which Greece has bequeathed to the Latin races, or that gift of fascination, strange, mysterious, truly divine, which has united all civilized mankind, without distinction of race, in the veneration of one solitary ideal originating in Judea. It would be pushing æsthetic Pantheism to excess, were we to put all the products of human nature on a footing of equality, and to place the pagoda and the great temple on the same step of beauty's ladder, because they are the result of an equally original and spontaneous conception. Human nature, it is true, is always beautiful, but it is not always equally beautiful. There is always the same descant, there are the same concords and discords in the earthly and the divine instincts, but there is not the same fulness nor the same sonorousness. Islamism is evidently the product of an inferior, and so to speak, a meagre combination of human elements. For this reason, its conquests have all been on the average plane of human nature. The savage races have been incapable of rising to it, and on the other side, it has not satisfied people who carried in themselves the seed of a stronger civilization. Persia, the only Indo-European country in which Islamism has obtained absolute dominion, did not adopt it without very essential modifications made to accommodate it to her mystical and mythological tendencies. Its excessive simplicity has everywhere been an obstacle to the truly fruitful development of knowledge, of lofty poetry, of delicate morality.

But, if we ask ourselves, what would be the destinies of Islamism in presence of a civilization essentially invasive, and called, it would seem, to universal sway, as far as the infinite diversity of the human species will permit such a thing, we must admit, that thus far, nothing justi-

fies us in forming precise notions on this point. On one side, it is certain, that if Islamism ever happens—I do not say to disappear, for religions never die—but to lose the high intellectual and moral guidance of an important part of the world, it will succumb, not beneath the assault of another religion, but beneath the blows of the modern sciences with their habits of rational and critical inquiry. On another side, it should be borne in mind, that Islamism, very unlike those lofty towers which stiffen against the storm, and fall all at once, has in its very flexibility, hidden forces of resistance. The Christian nations, in order to effect their religious reforms, have been obliged violently to break their unity, and to set themselves in open revolt against the central authority. Islamism, which has neither Pope, nor councils, nor bishops divinely instituted, nor well-appointed clergy; Islamism, which has never sounded the formidable abyss of infallibility, need be less afraid, perhaps, of the uprising of rationalism. Indeed, what is there for criticism to attack? The legend of Mahomet? That legend has scarcely more sanction than the pious beliefs which one who is in the bosom of Catholicism may reject without being a heretic. Strauss clearly has no occupation here. Would it assail the dogma? Reduced to its essential points, Islamism adds nothing to natural religion save the prophetic character of Mahomet, and a certain conception of Fatalism, which is less an article of faith than a general turn of mind susceptible of being directed to a purpose. Would it impugn its morality? There is a choice of four sects equally orthodox, among which its moral sense preserves a fair share of liberty. As to the worship, disengaged from a few incidental superstitions, it can, for simplicity, be compared only to that of the most refined of the Protestant sects. Did we not see at the beginning of this century, in the very country of Mahomet, a sectary start the vast political

and religious movement of the Wahhabites, by proclaiming that the true worship to be tendered to God, consists in bowing prostrate before the idea of his existence ; that the invocation of any intercessor beside him, is an act of idolatry ; and that the most meritorious work would be to pull down the tomb of the Prophet, and the mausoleums of the Imams ?

Symptoms of a nature much more serious disclosed themselves, I am aware, in Egypt and in Turkey. There, the contact with European science and morality has produced a licence of belief sometimes barely disguised. The sincere believers, who are conscious of the danger, do not conceal their fears, and denounce the books of European science as containing sad errors, subversive of all religious faith. For all that, I persist in believing, that if the East can surmount its apathy, and clear the bounds which thus far it has been unable to pass, in the matter of rational speculation, Islamism will not oppose a very serious obstacle to the progress of the modern mind. The want of theological centralization has always left a certain religious liberty to the Mussulman nations. Whatever M. Forster may say about it, the Khalifate has never resembled the Papacy. The Khalifate has been strong only in so far as it has represented the first conquering idea of Islamism. When the temporal power passed to the *Emir-al-Omra*, and the Khalifate became simply a religious power, it fell with the most deplorable abasement. The idea of a power purely spiritual is too fine for the East. All the branches of Christianity even have not been able to reach it ; the Greco-Slavic branch has never comprehended it ; the Germanic family has shaken it off and outgrown it ; the Latin nations alone have accepted it. Now, experience has demonstrated, that the simple faith of all people is not sufficient to preserve a religion, if a constituted hierarchy and a spiritual chief do not keep watch and ward over it. Was it faith that was want-

ing in the Anglo-Saxon people when the will of Henry VIII. handed them over, without their knowing it, one day to schism, the next to heresy? Mussulman orthodoxy not being defended by a permanent self-regulating body which recruits itself, and governs itself, is, then, quite vulnerable. It is superfluous to add, that if ever a movement of reform were manifest in Islamism, Europe could participate in it only through its most general influence. It would, with a very ill grace, think of regulating the faith of other people. While pursuing actively the propagation of its creed, which is civilization, it must leave to the nations the delicate task of accommodating their religious traditions to their new needs; and must respect the most absolute right of nations, as of individuals,—the right of presiding themselves, in the most perfect freedom, over the changes in their own interior being.

JOHN CALVIN.

M JULES BONNET, already known by some admirable works on the history of the Reformation, and especially by a biography of Olympia Morata, full of interest, has just published, in two volumes, a collection of Calvin's French Letters.* This precious correspondence had not been completely gathered together before. "On the point of returning to God," says Theodore Beza, "John Calvin, always having the interests of the Church at heart, placed in my hands his treasure, to wit, a vast heap of papers, desiring that they should be given to the light in case they contained anything that might be profitable to the churches." This wish of the dying apostle was but imperfectly fulfilled in the sixteenth century. The struggles which engaged all the energies of being, the disasters and the massacres which followed immediately on the Reformer's death, still more, the scruples of respectful admirers anxious to show all courtesy to his contemporaries, and at the same time to do justice to a memory which they held dear, all conspired, it seemed, to postpone the task which Calvin bequeathed to his friends. We have no longer cause to regret this, since a young and diligent historian has, with the piety of a disciple and the impartial exactness of a scholar, collected these relics of the cradle of his faith. M. Bonnet's work leaves but one thing to be de-

* Letters of John Calvin, now first collected and published from the original manuscripts. French Letters, vol. 2. Paris.

sired, a collection of the Latin letters, to complete, at the earliest moment, the two volumes dedicated to the French correspondence. Would it not have been better to unite both classes of letters in one series, and to present the Reformer's correspondence in rigorous chronological order? We incline to think it would. I am aware of the reasons that led the editors to pursue another plan; they thought that the French letters might have a literary or religious interest for people who would not read the Latin letters; but the ingenuous reader will hardly acknowledge such a motive as that. Calvin's collected letters are primarily a document of history; to prize these for their literary interest is to undervalue them, and to use them as a book of edification is to mistake their purport.

Is the character of Calvin, as illustrated by these new readings, perceptibly different from that which history and the portions of his correspondence already published draw for us? It would be going too far to claim that it is. Calvin was one of those absolute men, cast complete in one mould, who is taken in wholly at a single glance; one letter, one action suffices for a judgment of him. There were no folds in that inflexible soul which never knew doubt or hesitation. The natures that keep startling secrets for history to disclose, and present themselves under novel aspects with each posthumous revelation, are the flexible and rich natures which, being superior to their deeds, their destiny, their opinions even, are but half manifested to the world, and have always left one side in mystery that they might communicate freely with the Infinite. God, who gives the world over to the strong and violent, almost always refuses to them the subtle gifts which alone lead to the truth in speculative matters. Truth is completely involved in nice distinctions. Now, the man who would exert a powerful influence on the world must not regard nice distinctions; he must believe that he alone is wholly

right, and that they who differ from him are wholly wrong. Delicate and unimpassioned minds, critical of themselves, see the weak aspects of their own cause, and are now and then tempted to agree with their adversaries. The passionate man, on the contrary, absolute in his opinions, boldly identifies his cause with God's, and proceeds with the audacity naturally inspired by such a persuasion. The world belongs to him, and justly, for it is solely by the impulse of these firm minds that the world moves on; but the niceties of thought are refused him; the truth in its purified form he never beholds; his own dupe, he dies without attaining to wisdom.

Calvin, more than anybody, had that inflexible austerity which must ever characterize the man of action. I doubt if a more finished type could be found of the ambitious man, eager to make his thought prevail, because he thinks it true. Careless of wealth, of titles, of honours, indifferent to pomp, modest in his life, apparently humble, sacrificing everything to the desire of making others like himself, I hardly know of a man, save Ignatius Loyola, who could match him in these terrible transports; but Loyola threw into them a Spanish ardour and a sweep of imagination that had their beauty; to the last he remained an old reader of the *Amadis*, after the fashion of worldly chivalry cultivating the chivalry of the spirit, while Calvin has all the asperities of passion with none of its enthusiasm. He might be called an interpreter under oath, asserting his divine right to distinguish the Christian from the anti-Christian. His correspondence, lofty, grave, stoical, is utterly wanting in charm; it has no life—one never catches in it a spontaneous emotion, or a whisper from the heart. His style, likewise, is firm and nervous, but dry, dead, involved, often obscure, doubtless because the terrors and restraints of the time compelled him to hint at his meaning. His Latin letters, they say, disclose the tenderest side of him;

and precisely for this reason, among others, it is to be regretted that M. Bonnet did not enable us to read the two correspondences in connexion. In this I see nothing but severity—an austere conviction, a peevish temper that saw sin everywhere, that regarded life as an expiation. For one single moment, on occasion of the birth of his child, he tries to smile, but it is only to be most strangely out of tune, and to relapse quickly into his sadness. “It grieves me that I cannot be with you, at least half a day, to smile with you, while they try to make the little infant smile, under penalty, however, of enduring its weeping and wailing. For that key-note is the first struck at the beginning of this life, that we may laugh in good earnest when we go out of it.”

It is surprising that a man who appears to us in his life and writings so unsympathetic, should have been the centre of an immense movement in his generation, and that this harsh and severe tone should have exerted so great an influence on the minds of his contemporaries. How was it, for example, that one of the most distinguished women of her time, Renée of France, in her Court at Ferrara, surrounded by the flower of European wits, was captivated by that stern master, and by him drawn into a course that must have been so thickly strewn with thorns? This kind of austere seduction is exercised by those only who work with real conviction. Lacking that vivid, deep, sympathetic ardour which was one of the secrets of Luther's success, lacking the charm and the perilous languishing tenderness of Francis of Sales, Calvin succeeded, in an age and in a country which called for a reaction towards Christianity, simply because he was the most Christian man of his generation. His very moroseness was a condition of his success; for seriously religious people are more readily won by severity than by indulgence; they prefer the narrow ways to the broad and easy ones, and the surest means of

gaining their allegiance is to ask of them a great deal and seem to concede to them nothing. Need I add that in regard to the essential qualities of uprightness, honesty, sincerity, the correspondence published by M. Bonnet completely clears the reformer of the calumnies invented by hate and partisan feeling? Two letters manufactured by an unskilful forger to soil his memory, and reproduced through a tacit understanding, it would seem, by the superficial historians who succeeded Voltaire, are here imperiously remanded to the rank of apocryphal pieces. Were M. Bonnet's reasoning on this point less peremptory than it is, it would receive decisive confirmation in the new researches of Mr. Charles Read on the same topic, researches based on a comparison of these pretended autographs of Calvin with the pieces known to be from his own hand.* From the character and position of Calvin intolerance resulted as a matter of course. Whenever men allow themselves to be ruled by an opinion which they hold to be the complete and absolute truth, so plain that only blindness or guilt refuse to embrace it, they necessarily become bigots. At first sight there is a strange contradiction in Calvin's heated demand for liberty to him and his, and his refusal of liberty to others. But in point of fact, that is all very simple; he did not believe like the Catholics, but his belief was as arbitrary as theirs. Liberty of belief, the right of every individual to make his creed for himself, which is popularly but erroneously considered to be the essence of early Protestantism, was hardly anticipated in the sixteenth century. No doubt, the appeal from Church to Scripture which was the soul of the Reformation, must finally turn to the profit of criticism, and in this way, the first reformers are truly the fathers of free thought. But they neither understood this nor wished it. The

* Bulletin of the French Protestant Historical Society, 4th year, 1st series.

Catholics have said justly, of the French Revolution: "Raised against us it has, with God's help, wrought for us;" the philosophers can say the same of the Reformation. History offers numerous examples of this flat contradiction between the doctrines of a party and the secret tendencies which the party represents. In the dispute of the Jesuits with the Jansenists, the Jesuits maintained a doctrine more consonant with reason and more favourable to liberty than their adversaries; and yet Jansenism was in essence a liberal movement, round which the most sincere and enlightened men might, we conceive, have rallied.

That violent zeal, which forces the man of conviction to procure the salvation of souls by main force and in utter disregard of liberty, breaks out in the whole of Calvin's correspondence. Writing to the Regent of England during the minority of Edward VI.: "As I understand, sire, you have two sorts of insurgents against the King and the State of the realm; one sort are fantastical people who would like to throw all into confusion under pretext of the Gospel; the others are people stubborn in their attachment to the superstitions of the Romish Antichrist. The whole body of them richly deserve to be suppressed by the sword which is intrusted to you, seeing that they defy not only the King, but God who has seated him on his royal throne, and has commissioned you to protect his people as well as his majesty." The model he proposes to him, and later to the King of England, is the holy King Josias, whom God commended "for having abolished and harrowed out everything that served only to feed superstition." The example he warns them against is that of the Kings who, "having beaten down the idolaters, but not having completely eradicated them," are blamed because they did not level the chapels and places of foolish devotion. Like the Catholics, Calvin claims toleration, not in the name of liberty, but in the name of truth. When he engages the

civil magistrates to lay heavy hands on "the incorrigibles who despise spiritual penalties, and on the professors of new doctrines," it never for a moment occurs to him that the same principle might be turned against his own party; and wishing to exculpate himself from the murder of Servetus, he writes, without wincing, this terrible title; "A defence of the orthodox faith. . . . in which it is proved that heretics may rightfully be coerced by the sword."

Such violences astonished nobody at that time; they were in some sort a common right; Bolsec thrust out of Geneva; Gruet, beheaded; Gentilis, "barely escaping the scaffold, for a time, by retracting his opinions;" Servetus undergoing his atrocious punishment under the very eyes of Farel, are no isolated facts. Bitterness and menace flow naturally from Calvin's pen. "Knowing in part what kind of a man he was," writes he to Madame de Cany touching some unknown person, "could I have had my way, I would gladly have seen him rot in a ditch, and his coming delighted me as much as if he had cleft my heart with a dagger. . . . Be assured, Madame, had he not got away so quickly, in the discharge of my duty, it would not have been my fault if he escaped the flames." Here we recognize the terrible frankness of the man who wrote touching Servetus: "Should he come, and my authority hold, I will not suffer him to go away alive," the man who himself furnished the inquisition of Vienna with proofs against that unfortunate man, and sent to the archbishop of Lyons leaves from the book which was to serve to kindle his funeral pile.*

Death, even, failed to appease him. Three years after the execution of Gruet, somebody discovered in a garret an autograph work, in which the rebellious canon poured

* See the fine study of M. E. Saisset on Servetus, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February and March, 1848.

out in wrath and despair, the thoughts which in better times he might have been permitted to express calmly and wisely. Calvin, not deeming this writing sufficiently punished in the death of its author, caused it to be burned by the hands of the executioner, and drew up the condemnation of it himself. In place of the pity called for by the ravings of an exasperated man, who avenged his confinement by violent speech, there is nothing but rage at what he calls "blasphemies so execrable that no human creature could hear them without a shudder." This unhappy man, devoted by a fatality to death, guilty of having said badly in the sixteenth century what in the nineteenth century is said handsomely, is to him "the adherent of an infected and worse than diabolical sect, . . . belching out execrations that should make a man's hair stand on end; infections stinking enough to poison a whole country, so that all people of conscience ought to ask God's pardon for the blasphemy that has been heaped on his name among them."

The severities of Calvin in matters of private morality, astonish and wound us, perhaps, more even than those which orthodoxy exacted from him. Too sternly bent on cheapening human liberty, and completely absorbed in the reformation of morals, he perverted utterly the idea of the State, and made of Geneva a sort of theocratical republic, governed by the clergy, who carried their inquisition into every department of life. A Spiritual State was established at Geneva in the sixteenth century, as in the Italy of our own time, a *visitation* from house to house was annually made to inquire into the faith of the inhabitants, to separate the ignorant and the obdurate from the company of the faithful. The pen of the reformer directs the bitterest ironies against the set of libertines, who made a fruitless resistance to his vigorous rule. "There have been a few complaints and menaces from debauched persons, who cannot endure chastisement. Even the wife of the man who is to visit

you (Amedée Perrin), and who wrote you from Berne, lifted herself up rather haughtily. But she was obliged to get away into the fields, not finding the town healthy for her. The others lower their heads instead of raising their horns. One there is (Gruet), who will probably have a pretty heavy scot to pay. I opine it will be a matter of life with him. The young people think that I press them too hard, but if the reins were not held with a firm hand their case would be the more pitiable. We must secure their welfare, spite of their distaste for it." And again: "True it is, that Satan has plenty of matches hereabouts; but the flame goes out like a trodden spark. The capital punishment inflicted on one of their companions (Gruet) has made them draw in their horns considerably. As to your guest (Amedée Perrin), I cannot tell how he will carry himself when he comes back. His wife, however, has played the deviless to such a degree that she was obliged to get away into the country. He has been absent now about two months. He must bear himself meekly on his return."

Let us make haste to say that it would be the height of injustice to judge the character of Calvin by these rigours. Moderation and tolerance, prime virtues in critical ages like ours, could not exist in an age ruled by ardent and absolute convictions. Persuaded that sound belief was the supreme good, in comparison with which earthly existence was of small account, and assured of having exclusive possession of the truth, each party must be inexorable towards the rest. A terrible reciprocity was the result. The man who holds his existence cheap, and is ready to give it up for his faith, is sorely tempted to make light of others' existence too. Human life, which temperate epochs are justly so saving of, is sacrificed with frightful prodigality. The abominable excesses of 1793 can be explained only as they befel in one of those crises, in which human life sank, if I may say so, to the lowest price. A sort of frenzy pos-

esses men's minds. They take and give death with equal indifference. Let us imagine, if we can, the state of exaltation in which the fervent disciple of the Reformation lived, when from Paris, from Lyons, and from Chambéry, the news came of the tortures endured by his coreligionists. History has not dwelt enough on the atrocity of these persecutions, and the resignation, the courage, the serenity of those who suffered them. There are pages worthy of the first centuries of the church, and I have no doubt that a simple, close recital of these sublime conflicts, composed of the fragments and letters of the period, would equal the ancient martyrology in beauty. The voice of Calvin in these moments of trial rises to a fulness, a loftiness, truly admirable. His letters to the martyrs of Lyons, of Chambéry, to the prisoners of the Châtelet, sound like an echo of the heroic times of Christendom; like pages from the writings of Tertullian or Cyprian. I confess, that until M. Bonnet introduced me into this bloody circle of martyrs, I had understood neither the holiness of the victims, nor the ferocity of their executioners. Other persecutions doubtless have been more murderous. Philip II. shed more blood. What persecutor would not turn pale by the side of the Duke of Alva? But at least it was faith that lighted the piles and prepared the scaffolds in Spain and in the Low Countries. These hecatombs, offered up to truth, or what was deemed such, have their grandeur, and we need but half pity those who went down in this tremendous struggle, when each one fought for his God. Faith sacrificed them as faith sustained them. But the odious and horrible thing is that Sardanapalus, as Francis I. is called in Calvin's correspondence, should become the avenger of a faith he did not hold, in order to serve the interest of his policy, or secure quiet for his lusts. The absolute faith of Spain throws a kind of poetry over the flame of its funeral pyres. We form a high idea of human nobleness, as we

see the barbarian, in the full impetuosity of his instincts, choose faith before life, and take or give death for an abstract opinion. But when we see in the land of indifference, in the full light of civilization, noble women burned, children tortured, tongues cut out, wretches by thirties "soaking and languishing at the bottom of the ditches of the Châtelet" waiting their punishment, and the king, as proof of his zeal, declaring "that he was not satisfied with his Court of Parliament in Paris, and chiding his counselors as heedless and lazy, because they did not make the fires fast enough," the only sentiment is indignation, and we are surprised into doubting the moral worth of a country which could allow and provoke this execrable sporting with life.

We must not be surprised, then, that Calvin appears to us so severe, so harsh in his conviction, so intolerant of the conviction of others. How can one cherish a half belief in that for which he is proscribed? What faith so trembling that it would not become fanatical under torture? The joy of suffering for faith is so great that more than once passionate natures have embraced opinions for the luxury of dying for them. In this sense, persecution is an essential condition of all religious achievements. It has a marvellous effect in fixing ideas and banishing doubts, and we may be allowed to think that what people, wrongly in my judgment, call the scepticism of our time, would yield to the vigorous remedy. We are timid, undecided; we scarcely believe in our own ideas; perhaps, if it was our lot to be persecuted for them, we should end by believing in them. Let us not wish that we might be, for then we should become intolerant and persecutors in our turn.

That this austerity of character, in which lay Calvin's strength, is prejudicial to the growth of intellect, and excludes the flexibility of the free soul, that is in every way drawn on by the disinterested love of beauty and truth, is

incontestable. But executive power is bought at no less price; largeness of mind founds nothing; it is the narrow thought that unites men. Founders generally exhibit limited and unlovely spirits. We are surprised at first, on running over these letters of Calvin, to find in them the correspondence of a statesman and an administrator, burdened with details of business, rather than of a thinker or an ascetic. His theology even does not soar; free enough from scholasticism, a legist more than a theologian, in working out his reform, he is swayed not by speculative considerations, but by views of practical morality. His long professions of faith scarcely furnish a few lines which could be profitably taken up by the thought of our time; the creed has lost all its grandeur; their philosophy is feeble; imagination, poetry, all have disappeared. But how unjust to stop there! Of what consequence is it that Calvin was ordinary as a philosopher and theologian, if this very inferiority was a condition of his doing his work? Would a solitary and passionless thinker have succeeded as he did in lifting the incubus of the middle age, and in boldly rolling back ten centuries in the history of Christianity? Would Calvinism, again, without its powerful aristocratic organization, without the rigorous discipline to which it subjected the individual conscience, have victoriously resisted such furious attacks, and preserved an imperishable leaven in France? Force ordinarily is obtained only at the price of great sacrifices of liberty, and we may well believe that, apart from his sombre and austere character, the attempt of Calvin would have been, like so many others, merely an abortive effort to escape from the enormous pressure which Catholicism had at last begun to exert on the human mind.

M. Bonnet's excellent work will rank among the most important documents to be consulted by the historian of the revolutions of the sixteenth century. In spite of his own

lively and avowed convictions, M. Bonnet confesses the stains which disfigure the life of the Reformer, and blames his intolerance, while excusing it, as he should, by the temper of his age. Let us welcome, then, as a good omen the learned editor's promise, made in his preface, to give us a history of Calvin, based on original and authentic papers. Nothing less than the prospect of this great work will make us wait patiently for the fulfilment of another engagement which M. Bonnet has contracted with the public. I mean a life of *Rénée* of France. For my part, I regret that postponement which will for a long time yet forbid our knowing, as well as she deserves, one of the most enlightened women of her age, and one of the noblest souls of all ages. I know the reasons which have led M. Bonnet to give priority to the stern Reformer; guided by the purest and most unselfish considerations, he would first of all make converts, and he chooses what he deems duty before taste and success. But looking at it even with a view to making converts, he must allow me to combat his resolution; the Duchess of Ferrara is an apostle better suited to our generation than Calvin. The fascination of women is felt even in theology; they are privileged to have an opinion in these matters, and the passion which they put into them gives them an added charm. *Rénée* of France, spending the whole day reading treatises on the mass and predestination, artlessly seeking for the truth about all that, and enduring the most heroic suffering for her conviction, is the poem of Calvinism. The book in which M. Bonnet shall present this fine spectacle will be a fascinating book; I wish no other proof of that than the episode of *Olympia Morata*, already published, and the interest with which M. Bonnet invests that learned victim of persecution, while I dare not hope that even with his talent and affection he will succeed in making of Calvin a person whom we can love.

CHANNING AND THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

PROTESTANTISM is destined to share in the law common to all things human ; I mean, to live and grow without ever attaining a fixed point and a permanent state. This is its privilege, or, as some will have it, its curse. If we can believe that there exists on earth a complete system of revealed truths, given once for all, it is clear that Bossuet is right, when, in his haughty "History of the Variations," he puts forward this perpetual mobility, as the infallible sign of error. But if, on the other hand, it be our opinion, that no religious or philosophical system can pretend to an exclusive and absolute value, we must, evidently, praise the one that possesses such store of flexibility, that it can accommodate itself to the movement of humanity, undergo modifications with it, and with it, pursue issues ever new, and ends, as yet, unseen.

This tendency of Protestantism towards a more and more purified religious idea has hitherto been exhibited under two very distinct aspects, according to the different genius of the two great divisions of the Reformation. On one side, Germany, applying to theology its intellectual depth, its lofty imagination, its marvellous aptitude for critical research, reached, at the end of the last century and beginning of this, one of the grandest and most poetical forms of religion that can be conceived. It lasted but a moment ; but what a moment in the history of the human mind was that, when Kant, Fichte, Herder, were Chris-

tians; when Klopstock drew the image of the modern Christ; when rose that marvellous edifice of biblical exegesis, master-piece of searching criticism, and elevated rationalism! Never were so many and such great things included under the name of Christianity; but vagueness and indecision, the essential condition of poetry in religion, condemned this fair apparition to last but a day, and to leave no deposit for the future. The discord among the diverse elements that had for a moment existed harmoniously in its bosom, quickly came to light. Pure religious sentiment resulted in a strict pietism, rationalism, and criticism, in negative and sharp formulas quite analogous to those of our eighteenth century. Catholicism, always on the watch to profit by every weakness, invaded the territory at every point.

The English race, on its part, in Europe and in America, devoted itself to the solution of the grand problem thrown out by the Reformation, and after its fashion, went in pursuit of a formula of Christianity, which might be accepted by the modern mind. For this task, it brought neither the power of intellect, nor the high poetic faculty, nor the liberty of criticism, nor the vast and profound knowledge which, in our age, Germany alone has applied to religious questions. Great intellectual uprightness, admirable simplicity of heart, an exquisite moral sentiment, were the endowments with which this grave and strong race sought for the Christ. Unitarianism, the result of a compromise very similar to that which the Deacon Arius attempted in the fourth century, was the highest conclusion of its theology; excellent practical applications, a temper truly evangelical, in the best sense usually given to the word, make amends for the want of poetry and depth in its work. We may say, without hesitation, that the most admirable lessons in morals and social philosophy that the world ever yet listened to, have come from this quarter. Administered

by sound, solid natures, strangers, on one side, to artistic refinements and caprices, on the other, to the scholar's requirements and scruples, the honest and sensible school we are speaking of, has proved once more the diversity of the spirit's gifts, and has shown what a gulf separates the views of genius from the practical wisdom which labours efficiently for the welfare of the human race.

Channing, whose name, new among us, already attracts so much sympathy and precocious admiration, was undeniably the most complete representative of that wholly American experiment of religion without mystery, of rationalism without criticism, of intellectual culture without high poetry, which seems to be the ideal to which the religion of the United States aspires. If he is not the founder, Channing is certainly the saint of the Unitarians. The reports which come to us from America show that the persuasion of his sanctity is growing from day to day, and almost bordering on legend. A sudden fascination has attracted a certain number of choice spirits in France and England to his writings. One cannot help, then, applauding the thought which has led one of the most distinguished publicists and scholars, M. Laboulaye, to lend his name to the introduction among us of these excellent works. M. Laboulaye's remarkable essays, published in the "*Journal des Debats*," had already called attention in France to the name of Channing, and animated enlightened minds with the desire to know more intimately the master whose renown fills all America. The volume of translations which we announce* meets this desire; it includes the best part of Channing's works, his writings on society. On the first appearance of a religious phenomenon, really

* "*Œuvres sociales de W. E. Channing*," translated from the English, preceded by an *Essay on the Life and Doctrines of Channing*, and by an *Introduction* by M. E. Laboulaye, Member of the Institute.

peculiar to our time, and which seems sure of a great future, it is well to study with the sympathy that good and fine things deserve, but without decided partiality, the aspect of this illustrious reformer, and to ask what part his ideas may be called to play among us.

I.

William Ellery Channing* was born at Newport, in the State of Rhode Island, April 7, 1780, of a respectable family, in comfortable circumstances. We cannot say that his education was very distinguished, nor that the circle in which he grew up was particularly well suited to develop a mind of great speculative reach. Newport was a commercial town and a fashionable resort, and the very details into which his biographer artlessly enters, in order to set off the society that was found there, give us a very poor idea of it. "Rich merchants," he says, "retired sea-captains, and others drawn thither by considerations of health, formed a refined and even a gay society. The presence of English and French officers, during the War of Independence, gave a final polish to manners; we must add, too, that through the influence of French liberalism, and the license of speech so common among sea-faring people, impiety was widely diffused throughout almost all classes." It is hard to understand how, in the midst of merchants and retired officers, far from the great centres of instruction, one of those powerful and lofty individualities could be formed, to which we give the name of genius. From the start, then, we perceive where Channing must one day be deficient; I mean in that mental refinement which

* The biographical details which follow are taken from the "Memoirs of Channing" (New York), a collection full of interest, and introducing us to the very depth of Channing's soul.

comes from contact with an aristocracy of intellect, and which intercourse with the people is better calculated perhaps to develop than the society of the middle class.

For a man devoted especially to intellectual labours, this would be indeed an irreparable loss; but for a man destined, like Channing, to an altogether practical mission, it was possibly an advantage. It must be acknowledged that the qualities of subtlety and flexibility which are acquired by a varied culture of the intellectual powers would only impede the sweeping movement of an apostle. By force of seeing the different sides of things, we become undecided. The good no longer fires with enthusiasm, for we see it balanced by an almost equivalent infusion of evil. Evil always disgusts, but no longer goads as it should; for we get accustomed to regarding it as a necessity, and sometimes even as the condition of good. The apostle must not perceive all these nice shades of thought. The virtuous and right-minded Channing owed perhaps to his sober and somewhat frigid education the advantage of preserving all his life the energy of his moral tendencies, and the absolute bent of his convictions. He enjoyed that happy privilege of healthy minds, of walking on the edge of the abyss without being seized with giddiness, and of surveying the world at an angle so small that they are not terrified by its immensity. In speculation he never went beyond the Scotch school, whose wise moderation he carried into his theology. He had little acquaintance with Germany, and he but half understood it. His literary ideas and his scientific knowledge were those of an instructed and cultivated man, not specially gifted with penetration or originality.

On the other hand, on all questions of social, moral, political order, he meditated very early and with a great deal of force. The idea of communism, the first, and consequently the falsest that meets the mind when it begins to

reflect on the reform of human society, crossed his mind for a moment; he was even tempted to join himself as minister to a company of emigrants whose principle was a community of goods. His childhood and youth were tormented by great disquiets which are strangely in contrast with the profound calmness of the rest of his life. Forty years after this period of trial, he recurred to it gently, and spoke of it in the following terms: "I lived alone, devoting my nights to the building of plans and projects, and having nobody under my roof except in the hour when I was teaching; then I worked as I have never done since. Having no single human being to whom I could impart my thoughts, and avoiding ordinary society, I passed through mental and moral combats, through troubles of heart and mind so vivid and absorbing that they deprived me of sleep and sensibly injured my constitution. I was reduced almost to a skeleton; still, I recal with pleasure those days of loneliness and sadness. If I ever aspired with my whole soul towards purity and truth, it was then. In the midst of rude conflicts, this grand question rose within me: Shall I obey the highest or the lowest principles of my nature? Shall I be the victim of worldly passions, or the child and the servant of God? I remember that this great conflict went on in me, and none of those who were about me so much as suspected what I passed through."

His reflections on religion led him very early into a profound discontent with the established church, and a strong antipathy to the absolute and terrible doctrines of Calvinism. His indignation at this "vulgar and frightful theology" as he calls it, breaks out on every page of his writings. His whole theology henceforth is summed up in this one word: "God is good." The austere views of religion which people regard as favourable to piety, seemed to him a cruel severity which spreads a melancholy veil

over God, over the present life, over the life to come, and by its sadness leads fatally to the superstitions of paganism. "English theology," he wrote, about 1801, "seems to me, altogether, of very little value. To me an established church appears to be the grave of intelligence. To impose a fixed invariable creed is to build prison walls round the soul. . . . The timidity, the coldness, the dulness which generally mark all books of theology is principally to be attributed to the cause we speak of." And some years after; "I know that Calvinism is embraced by many excellent men; but I know too that on some hearts it has the saddest effects, that it spreads impenetrable darkness over them, that it begets a spirit of servility and fear, that it chills the best affections, that it checks the most virtuous efforts, that it overthrows sometimes the seat of reason. The influence of this system on sensitive minds is always to be dreaded. If people could believe it, they would find in it grounds of discouragement that would run even to madness. If I and all my dear friends, and all my race have come from the hands of God totally depraved, irresistibly drawn towards evil and detesting good; if but a portion of the human race can be saved from this miserable condition, and the remainder must be condemned to endless torments and eternal flames by the Being who gave us a perverse and depraved nature, then in my judgment, there remains nothing but to lament in anguish of heart; existence is a curse, and the Creator is, I dare not say what. O merciful Father, I cannot speak of thee in the terms which this system suggests. No, thou hast given me too many proofs of thy kindness, to allow such a reproach to pass my lips. Thou hast created me to be happy; thou hast called me to virtue and to piety, because in virtue and piety happiness consists, and thou dost not expect from me what thou hast not made me capable of accomplishing."

The religious condition to which Channing thus found himself led, was a doctrine very similar to that of the Arians and Pelagians. He did not regard man as wholly corrupted by sin; he did not see in the Christ the incarnate God, descended to the earth to bear the burden of our transgressions, and purchase our justification by his own sufferings; but neither did he regard man as being in a normal condition, and as advancing naturally towards goodness. In Jesus Christ he did not see merely a person of superior religious genius who by means of a delicate temperament and under the stimulus of the national enthusiasm had attained to the most perfect union with God. He rather fell in with those who consider the human race to be actually degenerated by an abuse of free will. In Jesus Christ he recognized a sublime being, who had wrought a crisis in the condition of humanity, had renewed the moral sense, and touched with saving power the fountains of good that were hidden in the depths of the heart of man.

These doctrines had many points in common with those of Unitarianism, which already counted several churches in America. Channing attached himself to the Unitarians, and at the age of twenty-three accepted the office of pastor, which he filled the rest of his life, in the church in Federal street, Boston; but he never carried into it a sectarian or partisan spirit. His aversion to every official establishment in religion, made him fear that even the broadest of the sects might be too narrow. There is scarcely one of his sermons in which he does not revert to this fundamental thought. "I beg you to remember," he says, "that in this discourse I am speaking in my own name. I give you the opinions of no sect. I give you my own. I alone am responsible for what I say; let none listen to me to know what others think. I belong, it is true, to that class of Christians who believe that there is but one God, the Father,

and that Jesus Christ is not this only God ; but my adhesion to this sect is very far from being complete, and I do not seek to draw new converts to it. I care little for what other men believe. I listen attentively to their arguments, their conclusions I am free to accept or to reject. It is true, I bear joyfully the name Unitarian, because people try to cry it down, and I have not learned the religion of Christ to shrink before the reproaches of men. Were this name more honoured than it is, I might be glad to discard it, for I fear the chains that a party imposes. I wish to belong not to a sect, but to the brotherhood of free minds, that love the truth and that follow Christ on earth and in heaven. I wish to escape from the narrow inclosure of a particular church, that I may live under the open sky, in day-light, with a wide view all about me, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following the truth humbly but resolutely, however steep or solitary the path in which it leads. I am not, therefore, the mouth-piece of a sect ; I speak for myself alone, and I thank God that I live in an age and amid circumstances which make it a duty to open my whole soul with frankness and simplicity."

The real originality of Channing lies in this idea of a pure Christianity, disengaged from all sectarian bonds ; in his abhorrence of all spiritual despotism, even in its most liberal construction ; in his hatred of what he calls "a degrading uniformity of opinion." No one has used stronger language in condemning an official and prescribed faith ; nobody has better comprehended that a truth which a man has not drawn from his own heart, and which he applies to himself as a sort of external remedy, is inefficacious, and destitute of moral worth. Channing has an antipathy to the word Belief. In the submission demanded for faith, he sees a remnant of the old system which rested on fear, and on the oppression of individual consciences by con-

stituted authority. He thinks it is better to rouse a few bad passions than to perpetuate slavery and lethargy. Unity, as the Church from its origin has understood it, seems to him henceforth impossible of attainment. Unity in variety is, in his view, the law of the future Church; and he nursed the beautiful dream that the Catholicity, imposed by a clergy which was distinct from all faithful men and women, and which kept a monopoly of things religious, would be superseded hereafter by the universal communion of Christians, animated by pure love.

This free and lofty tolerance is the most pleasing side of Channing, and it inspires him with the noblest sentiments. Let us make haste to quote him: "Your principal duty in the domain of credence," said he, "may be summed up in two precepts: *Respect those who differ from you; respect yourselves.* Honour men of different sects. Do not fancy that you have the exclusive privilege of truth and goodness. Never regard the church of Christ as shut up in the limits of a human invention, but as comprising all sects. Honour all men! At the same time, respect yourselves. Never allow your opinions to be treated with contempt; but since you impose them on nobody, show that you revere them as the truth, and that you look for respect and courtesy from those who talk with you on this subject. Put yourselves always on a footing of equality with every sect, and encourage none, by your timidity, to assume towards you a tone of dictation, of superiority, or of scorn."

One singular consequence of this unlimited breadth, of this exclusion of all exclusiveness, was that he became particularly tolerant of the most intolerant of all religious associations. All about him he saw Catholicism calumniated, half persecuted; he loved it. The lively sympathy which he conceived for the writings of Fenelon, the influence of the beautiful memories which Cheverus left in the United States, and especially the advantage which Catholicism, in

good

his view, possessed, in not being an official religion in his own country, gave this bent to his thoughts. He believed in the future of Catholic extension in England, and particularly in the Oxford movement, because in it he saw a reaction of the individual conscience against the established Church. He was indignant at the theologians who were alarmed by the progress of Catholicism, and yet held themselves to be as infallible as the pope. "Do they not perceive," he said, "that if men must choose between two infallibilities, they will choose the pope as being the most ancient, and as being sustained by the greatest number of voices? This system could not have lasted so long and prevailed so extensively, did it not have some deep foundation in our nature. The ideas and the words 'church' and 'antiquity,' have a powerful charm. In their weakness, their ignorance, and their sloth, men love the shelter of a vast organization which time has consecrated. How strong and confident we become when we are sustained by the multitude, by a great name, or by the authority of ages. It is not surprising that the Roman Church should revive at this juncture, when a sickly fear of innovation reacts against the spirit of reform, and drags men back towards the past. This Oxford movement has great chances of spreading, because it seems to be less the work of the policy or ambition of the clergy than of a genuine fanaticism."

Such was Channing, during forty years, in his Federal street Pulpit. Absorbed by the exclusive idea of good, he saw little outside of this supreme object. He visited Europe, did not understand it, and did not try to understand it. His life, externally, was simple and pleasant. In France, where every exceptional calling devoted to things divine, is outlawed from the common rights, and implies celibacy, an apostle, a saint, living as all other people live would be a strange spectacle. Vulgarity has such empire among us that no young girl would have consented to marry Chan-

ning. No incident crossed this calm and serene existence. The indefatigable optimism which was the whole of his religion, never left him for a moment. "The earth," he said, "becomes younger with years; man improves with age." The last summer he passed on earth, some one in his presence asked what age might be considered as the happiest period of life; he smiled and answered, about the age of sixty! That was his age then. He died shortly after, in October, 1842, without pain or sadness, at sunset, the hour he had always loved and held in sacred observance. He averred that as he advanced in life he had been more and more happy. "Life," he wrote, "seems to me a gift which acquires a greater value every day. I have not found it a cup foaming and sparkling on the surface, but growing insipid as it is drained. In truth, I detest that worn out comparison. . . . Life is a blessing to us. Could I see others as happy as I am myself, what a world ours would be! But the world is good, in spite of the clouds that rest on it. The longer I live, the more I see the light piercing through the clouds. I am sure that the sun is above them."

II.

Channing became a writer without premeditation. His works display no literary ambition; there is not one of them that exhibits the smallest pretension to art or style. Channing is a minister of the Gospel and a preacher; his works are simply sermons, spiritual letters, or articles inserted in the "Christian Examiner," a religious journal. The idea of writing a book did not come to him till very late, and happily he did not carry it out. The plan of this book was neither new nor original. It would have been an essay, like so many others, on man and human nature, the perpetual theme of the Anglo Scotch philosophy. I am

strongly inclined to think that Channing's essay would have been no exception to the weariness of books of this sort. Excellent, no doubt, for certain stages of intellectual culture, but teaching nothing, and possessing little value, now that history and general considerations on the development of the human race have almost banished that miserable philosophy from memory.

If Channing is not a writer, no more is he a man of science or a philosopher. He lacks information; his historical knowledge is all at second or third hand. He has not that delicate feeling for shades of thought which we call criticism, without which there is no insight into the past, and consequently no extended understanding of human affairs. It is surprising to see how destitute the English in general are of that gift of historical intuition, so richly bestowed on Germany, so largely possessed by some minds in France, provided the matter in hand does not involve an antiquity too remote, or an intellectual state differing too much from our own. At this very hour, antiquities are taught at Oxford as they were taught among us in Rollin's time, perhaps not so well. In certain departments of political history this ordinary penetration may produce works that are respectable and true enough; but in the history of literature, religion, philosophy, which is destined to become more and more the great history, and to throw into the shade what formerly bore the name, quite another power of divination is needed, and such is the importance obtained by researches of this class, in our day, that one who has not this quality can no longer be a thinker or a philosopher. Happily one can very well be an honest man without it. This is what Channing preëminently is. This he is to a degree that amounts almost to genius, and is worth at least a thousand times as much as talent. Like all men born for the practice of virtue rather than for speculation, he has few ideas, and his ideas are very simple.

He believes in revelation, in the supernatural, in miracles, in prophecy, in the Bible. He undertakes to prove the divineness of Christianity by arguments which differ in no respect from those of the old school. This puritan who haggles so vehemently about his faith, is at bottom very credulous respecting everything historical, the fault of his not being broken in to the intellectual gymnastics which are supplied by long exercise on the problems of the human mind.

At the same time that he lacks critical power, Channing lacks also high originality of sentiment. When we compare this excellent soul, this saint of contemporaneous America, with those who, like him, in the past, have been possessed with a zeal for the glory of God or the good of their brother man, the first feeling is one of sadness and chill. Instead of the splendid theology of the antique ages, instead of the grand intoxication of a Francis d'Assisi, who speaks so powerfully to the imagination, we find ourselves in presence of a respectable gentleman, very sedate, very well dressed; enthusiastic and inspired after his fashion, but without the glory of the marvellous; devoted, but without grandeur; noble and pure, but without poetry, unless it be poetry of a domestic and private character. Far from us those paradoxes of incomplete minds which, because they have understood the beauty of the past, would like to reconstruct a vanished world with archæological regrets, as if the first condition of serious admiration were not the power of looking at everything in its natural medium, that is to say, in its epoch. The dazzling fantasies of the ancient religions would be simply chimerical in our day. Dreams are not reproduced by an act of will, and we cannot justly blame modern men because they have not the qualities which, in artless eras, were due to ignorance and simplicity. It would be as unjust to reproach Channing with the humbleness of his theology, seeing that this

very humbleness is, in matters of abstract speculation, a condition of reasonableness. Fundamentally, his theology is all that theology can be in the nineteenth century, and in America, level, simple, sensible, practical; a theology on Franklin's pattern, with no great reach of metaphysics, and no transcendental aims. They who prize a religion for its simplicity and its transparency, must be enchanted with this. Certain it is that if the modern mind is right in wishing a religion which, without excluding the supernatural, diminishes it to the smallest possible amount, the religion of Channing is the most perfect and the purest that has ever appeared.

But is that all, forsooth? and when the creed shall be reduced to a belief in God and in Christ, what shall we have gained? Will scepticism rest satisfied? Will the formula of the universe be more complete and lucid? Will the destiny of man and of humanity be less impenetrable? Does Channing escape the objections of incredulity better than the Catholic theologians? Alas! No. He admits the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and does not admit his divinity; he admits the Bible, and does not admit hell. He displays all the captiousness of a scholastic in establishing against the Trinitarians the sense in which Christ is the son of God, and the sense in which he is not. Now, if we grant that he had a real and miraculous existence from first to last, why not frankly call him divine? The one demands no greater effort of faith than the other. In truth, in this path, it is the first step only which costs; there is no use in haggling over the supernatural; faith is all of one piece; and the sacrifice once made, it is not decent to take back in detail, the rights which, once for all, have been fully conceded.

There, in my opinion, would be Channing's narrow and contradictory side. What sort of a Rationalist is he, who admits miracle, prophecy, a revelation? What is the use

of telling me that this revelation must be judged by reason, and that in case of collision, reason must be preferred? Every stopping-place in Rationalism is arbitrary. The fact of this revelation which is assumed at the start as demonstrated, is, moreover, the very fundamental point to be established; and, in view of the demands of modern criticism, this cannot be called an easy task. Here we are, then, brought back to the diversity of opinions, the cure for which is sought in the theory of a revelation. Now, on the supposition that there is one absolute statement of the truth, how can we hope to arrive at it by individual efforts? How push confidence in our private judgment to the extent of claiming infallibility for ourselves, and of believing that we shall find the fixed point which nobody thus far has discovered?

I am aware that I am here urging against Channing the objection which the Catholic theologian urges against Protestantism generally. It is no other, in fact, than the argument of the Catholic controversialists; a very weak argument, or rather, no argument at all, as addressed to that broad Protestantism, which is nothing but Spiritualism attaching itself to the grand tradition of the Christ, it has always seemed to me unanswerable by that fraction of the Reformed Church, which aspires to possess the apparent vigour of Catholicism without its chains. When Protestantism results in anything short of a purely rational religion, it seems to me illogical. That this inconsequence may be pardonable, and often honourable, I am the first to concede; but it must be avowed, that if Protestantism aims merely at substituting one set of dogmatic beliefs for another, it has no longer an excuse for living; Catholicism, in that case, is by far the more respectable of the two. Channing never reached a perfectly clear statement of his own thought on this point. If, on one side, he preaches the most entire liberty of belief, on the other, he stops very far

short of pure criticism. If he rouses himself energetically against the Established Church, he never abandons the hope of finding the true form of the evangelical doctrine. If he bids men search for themselves, it does not enter his imagination that independent search can carry anybody outside of Christianity. And yet, if we grant the fact of a revelation made at a particular moment in history, if we grant truths divinely manifested, and consequently binding on the conscience of him who thinks them revealed, where is the difficulty in recognizing an outward establishment, a Church teaching by supernatural illumination? It is neither easier nor harder to accept a miracle wrought eighteen hundred years ago, than a miracle which is perpetuated in our own generation. Catholicism has some right to say to Channing—"You are no more liberal than I, and you submit to an authority much less obvious: you submit to the Bible; I submit to the Church." I own, that, for my part, I would rather accept the authority of the Church than that of the Bible. The Church is more human, more living; immovable as it is supposed to be, it yields more readily to the needs of each epoch. If I may venture to say so, it is more easily brought to listen to reason, than a book which has been shut for eighteen centuries.

Channing never saw quite clearly that the distant, if you please, but inevitable consequence of admitting a revelation is the admission of an authority to interpret it, the admission of Catholicism, in other words. The political institution of religion, as understood by the nations born of Rome, is very justly repugnant to him. But from the fact that such a system leads fatally to sloth and indifference, have we a right to conclude that the less uneasy religion of the southern nations (and France is becoming a southern nation more and more) has not also its poetry? Because these people, instead of apprehending religion as an endless

pursuit, go to it merely for repose—because, averse to trouble, they relish at their leisure a religion that is offered to them ready made, is that a reason for excluding them from the kingdom of God? Who knows that they are not wiser, after all, than they who seek after theological truth? If they do not debate the problem, is it not because they have a vague and instinctive feeling that it is insoluble? The Catholic, taking the dogma as time has fashioned it, and without searching into its depths, is, in one sense, nearer a high philosophy than the Protestant, who is incessantly in quest of a pretended primitive formula of Christianity. If it were possible to give a proper direction to the very source of opinion in the Church, the Catholic method of leaving the dogma to be shaped by the current of prevailing ideas, and by a kind of tacit understanding among believers, would be a good deal more profound than the appeal to a fixed revelation in which people feel bound to find one faith for all ages.

As a matter of course, the soul, deeply penetrated with the sanctity of religious things, will cry out against this external religion, remnant of Roman paganism, which commands not faith but respect. I shall always remember tenderly the deep horror expressed to me by an American missionary, who had just attended an official ceremony at the Madeleine. That profane pomp, those uniforms in the holy place, those places marked as in a theatre, all that distraction which assuredly was not of God, that crowd in which nobody thought of praying, all left on him the impression of a frightful paganism. A laudable sentiment this, to be sure, and I hasten to say that my sympathies are all with earnestness and delicacy of conscience. But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that paganism has very deep roots among certain races, and exacts a certain measure of concession. If an abstract, purely monotheistic religion were the best for all men, no religion would be

comparable to Islamism. By its varied mysteries, and especially by its worship of the Virgin and the saints, Catholicism meets that need of outward demonstration and of plastic art which is so strong in the south of Europe. Besides, it is in the nature of an official religion to make a less imperious demand on belief, precisely because it stands only as an institution to which one can adjust himself without yielding to it an absolute faith, just as obedience to the laws of the state does not necessarily involve a belief that they are the best in the world. Hence it happens that at bottom countries rigorously Protestant, where religion is taken up as a very serious matter, are almost as intolerant, for the free thinker at least, as Catholic countries; hence, finally, comes the singular fact, that Catholic countries, above all, have been familiar with unbelief. Was ever a country less cramped by its religion than the Italy of the Middle Ages, and of the *renaissance* before the Reformation? The philosophy of the eighteenth century could have had its birth only in a Catholic country.* These two things rank together, and are associated by a host of secret analogies, which we have no space here to enumerate.

Impartial criticism, while it comprehends and applauds the scruples of the American school, is not, therefore, obliged to share them entirely. It knows that everything on earth borders on good and on evil; on one side it sees religious indifference resulting from the official system, on the other it sees individual aberrations resulting from the

* The opinion that the philosophy of the eighteenth century had its origin in the Reformation is erroneous. If this philosophy has antecedents, we must look for them in the pagan Italy of 1500. Now, the Reformation is just a reaction against the Italian unbelief of that period. Need I add, however, that in a more general sense the Reformation claims a brilliant share in the work of liberating the human mind, and that every true liberal fairly derives from it a branch of his ancestry.

theological mania. No doubt, if there were an absolute truth which would reward the efforts made to get at it, it would be a duty to preach to all men research and examination ; but, honestly, can we hope to be happier than so many others, and to enjoy alone the privilege of recovering the veritable creed of the religion of Christ? How far is it good for a country to indulge this passion for theological research? Northern Germany, I know, thanks to its complete religious liberty, and to its marvellous aptitude for all matters in the domain of thought, has perhaps illustrated the finest page in the history of the human soul. But does it appear that England and the United States, where each man makes theology a personal affair, possess an intellectual culture superior to that of France, where no man busies himself with theology? Is the habitual reading of the Bible, which is a legitimate consequence of the Protestant system, such a great benefit in itself—and is the Catholic Church so very guilty for having set a seal on the book, and hidden it from sight? Not by any means ; and I am tempted to say, that the most magnificent stroke of policy on the part of that great institution was the putting itself alive and active, in the place of a dumb authority. The Hebrew literature doubtless is an admirable literature, but only for scholars and critics who can study it in the original, and restore the true sense to each of the curious fragments which compose it. As for those who admire it on trust, they generally admire in it what is not there ; the real originality of the books of the Old and the New Testament escapes them. What shall we say of the illiterate people who, with no preparation, plunge into that obscure antiquity? Imagine what mental chaos the habitual reading of a book like the Apocalypse, or even like the Book of Kings, must cause with simple and uninstructed people ! We are acquainted with the strange aberrations which, at the period of the English revolution, pro-

ceeded from this unwholesome meditation. In America, the source of such extravagances is not yet dried up. No doubt it is much pleasanter to see people reading the Bible than reading nothing, as is the case in Catholic countries; but we must also grant that the book might be better chosen. A sad spectacle is that of an intelligent nation bestowing its leisure hours on a monument of another age, and looking all the time for creeds in a book where there are none.

Channing's efforts to escape from this pressure of the Bible sometimes engage him in singular struggles against the received texts. Hell, in the orthodox sense, is revolting to his gentle nature. Hell, according to him, is only in the conscience, even as heaven has no locality and is nothing else than union with God and with all great and good beings. I accede cheerfully; but how childish to set about counting the number of times hell is mentioned in the Bible, to note with satisfaction that it is spoken of but five or six times, and that a "good" translation might even find a way of getting rid altogether of the offensive word? That which is revealed is revealed wholly, if at all; and, if a single word has proceeded from God, it is not for man to soften it down to suit the progress of his reason. In history the same perplexities recur. Channing is led to fashion a primitive Christianity, wholly ideal, to which it is our simple duty to return. "The religion," he says, "which was given for the elevation of man, has been used to make him abject. The religion which was given to create a generous hope in us, has been made an instrument of servile intimidation and of torture. The religion revealed by God to enrich the human soul, has been employed to shut it up in the narrow inclosure of a sect, to found an inquisition, to kindle the piles of martyrs. The religion given to render thought and conscience free, has served, by a criminal perversion, to bruise them both in order to subject

them to the priests and to purely human creeds." This Protestant theory of an age of gold in Christendom, followed by an age of iron, in which the primitive thought became obscured, has little to recommend it. Christianity never was either so perfect as the Protestants suppose it at its beginning, or so degraded as they paint it at its decline. No one generation, in its long career, can be taken as its ideal age, as there is no one in which it has wholly failed in its mission. A critical history of the earliest periods of Christianity would exhibit the singular illusions which men have entertained respecting this primitive age—as yet so little known, because it has hardly been studied, save in a party spirit, and with the intention of finding in it arguments for or against dogmas, the germs whereof were then hardly existing.

In general, Channing lacks what America has lacked hitherto—high intellectual culture, critical knowledge. He is not perfectly versed in the questions that interest the human mind; he does not know the general results of the acquisitions of his time. As a spiritual religion, his is not so good as that of Northern Germany; as a grand institution, it is not so good as Catholicism; it demands too many sacrifices from criticism, and it does not demand enough from those who experience the need of believing. That the tendency of modern times is to call for a religion of this sort, formed from the common residue of all the faiths, after the elimination of the doctrinal peculiarities of each one, numerous facts lead us to believe. The whole of Asia, for two or three centuries past, seems, by the simplification of its old symbols, to have arrived at Deism. India, tired of wandering in the labyrinth of endless sects, comes to the same result. Rammohun Roy, the most illustrious representative of the Brahmanic race in our age, died a Unitarian of Channing's stamp. Voltaire, translated into Guzarati, does service now in the controversy of Zoroaster's

last disciples, who are pure Deists, with the Protestant missionaries. Beneath the revolutionary movements of China is hidden, evidently, an appeal to Monotheism against the degradation with which the old worships of the celestial empire seem to be smitten. Is this an indication that we are to regard Deism as the final term in the evolutions of humanity? That might be, if the human mind did not include, by the side of reason, instincts far more capricious. Religion is not philosophy alone—it is art; we must not, therefore, ask it to be too reasonable. That indestructible grain of fancy will derange what appears to be the most rational combinations. The need of believing in something extraordinary is innate in man. A religion that is too simple will not satisfy him ever. The day after the strictest barriers have been put up, the caprices, the particular credences, the shabby practices, will resume their rights. Faith will have the impossible; it is satisfied with nothing cheaper. Even to this day, every year, the Hindous walk over glowing coals to attest the virginity of Draupadi, the common wife of the five sons of Kourou.

III.

The true mission of Channing was evidently altogether moral. His theology, like every attempt at resolving an insoluble problem, is open on all sides to attack; his morality may be praised without reserve; in this he is, for us, original and new. In fact, nothing in our European organization gives us the least idea of such an apostleship. In our view, the zeal for converts, which makes the apostle or the missionary, is nothing without a positive and complicated religion, loaded with dogmas and observances. Here we have a Vincent de Paul, minus the devotion; a Cheverus minus the priesthood. One should read the biography

which Channing himself has given us of Rev. Dr. Tuckerman, his master and guide in this path of charity, to form an adequate conception of this new form of laical sanctity, as the United States seem destined to reveal it to the world. Channing's eminently English nature, his gentlemanly delicacy, his optimism, too, which made the sight of evil a real torture to him, rendered his charitable ministry all the more meritorious. "My spirit seeks the good, the perfect, and the beautiful," he wrote. "I cannot, without a sort of agony, bring vividly before my imagination what man suffers through his own crimes and the cruelties of his brothers. The utmost perfection of art, expended on horrible or purely tragical subjects, cannot reconcile me to the subjects. It is only from a sense of duty that I read in the papers the recital of crimes and miseries. . . . You see I have little of the stuff for a reformer in my composition."

Really I know nothing in our time that suggests these beautiful and noble moral discourses, and this lofty way of taking up social questions. The problems which have exercised the human mind among us, and the solution of which is not yet arrived at, are all resolved in Channing's mind, by charity, by respect for man, by the conviction that human nature is good, and that in its free development it tends to good. Never did man more firmly believe in progress, in the beneficent influences of knowledge and civilization on all classes. Channing is a democrat in this sense, that he acknowledges no nobility but that of virtue and work, that he sees no salvation for humanity save in the intellectual cultivation of the masses of the people, and their adoption into the bosom of the great civilized family. "I am a leveller," he wrote in 1831, "but I would fain accomplish my mission by raising those who are in the lowest rank, by rescuing the labourers from the poverty which degrades, and from the ignorance which brutalizes

them. If I understand the meaning of Christianity and philanthropy, there is no precept more clear than that."

In politics, Channing has little penetration. He is liberal, and what is very rare, liberal from motives of religion. The revolution of 1880 gave him lively joy. He heard the news at Newport, and repaired immediately to Boston, to exchange congratulations with the friends of constitutional liberty, and to impart from the pulpit the hopes that filled his heart. Greatly astonished was he to find but a feeble echo of his enthusiasm, and he cursed more vehemently than ever the torpor of opinion caused by worldly interests. The coldness of the young men particularly, surprised and afflicted him. Going back to the processions and the bonfires of his youth he did not understand how the free men of America could see with indifference the reappearance of Lafayette, the calm firmness of the people and the future of liberty which seemed to be opening for Europe. One evening towards this period, he met a person of his acquaintance: "Well, sir," he said in a tone of sarcasm which was not habitual with him, "are you also too old, too wise, like the young men from college, to have any enthusiasm to show in honour of the heroes of the Polytechnic School?" "Sir," replied his interlocutor, "you seem to me the only young man I know." "Always young for liberty," responded Channing in a ringing voice, and grasping warmly the hand of his friend.

Noble sentiments these, at which one should never blush. And yet, Channing's political and social ideas, simple, excellent, pure as they are, are no more exempt from criticism than his religious ideas. Would a people who should fill out Channing's ideal be really a complete people after the model of a high civilization as we conceive it? It may be doubted. It would be an honest people, orderly, composed of good and happy individuals; it would not be a great people. Human society is more complex than Channing supposes.

In face of calamities like those of the middle ages, we allow ourselves to think that the essential thing would be to render life as little as possible unhappy; in face of moral laxity like that we behold, we easily fancy that the work of social reform might consist in giving to the world a little honesty; but these are limited views, conceived under the pressure of momentary necessities. Man is not placed on the earth merely to be happy; nor is he placed here merely to be honest; he is here to accomplish great things through society, to arrive at nobleness, at sanctity, as Christianity called it, and to outgrow the vulgarity in which the existence of almost all individuals drags on. The least inconvenience in Channing's world would be that people would die of weariness there; genius would be useless; great art would be impossible. The Scotch puritan of the seventeenth century best represents to us the dream of the Unitarians, a sort of ideal after the fashion of Israel, where everybody should know the Bible, reason out his faith, discuss public affairs; where drunkenness should be unknown, where no one should hear an oath. But what very precious gift has the Scotland of the seventeenth century enriched the world with? Would not God have been better adored if, at the risk of a few jarring words, more great and beautiful things had been produced? Italy, its precise opposite, is certainly the country in which Channing's ideal has been most faintly realized; in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, pagan, immoral, made over to all the transports of passion and genius; next, dejected, superstitious, hopeless; now, sombre, irritable, destitute of wisdom. And yet, if we must see Italy sink with its past, or America with its future, which would leave the greatest void in the heart of humanity? What is the whole of America as compared with one ray of that infinite glory with which towns of second and third rank in Italy—Florence, Pisa, Siena, Perugia—

are all aglow? Before they can hold a rank in the scale of human grandeur comparable to these cities, New York and Boston have a great deal to do, and I doubt if they succeed in approaching it through total abstinence societies, and the propagation of the pure Unitarian doctrine.

Convinced with good reason that the perfection of human society consists solely in the improvement of the individual, Channing fastens passionately on details which do honour to the delicacy of his conscience, but the minuteness of which provokes a smile. He saw justly that intemperance was the principal cause of the misery and the coarseness of the lower classes, whence he concluded that to cure intemperance would be to attack social evil at its root; a great portion of his life and effort was in fact devoted to this certainly very praiseworthy labour. But really, would a people that drank nothing but water, be the greater for it? Would it illustrate a more beautiful page in human history? Would it reach a higher standard of art, of thought? This habit of attaching a social importance to a thing which we can only regard as pertaining to individual morality plainly shows the gulf which divides American thought from ours, and how difficult it will be for the old and the new world, pursuing such different views, ever to meet on the same policy or the same faith.

Of the two modes of conceiving human progress,—as the result of the gradual elevation of the mass of humanity, and consequently of the lower classes, towards a better condition — or as accomplished by an aristocracy which supposes beneath it a vast abasement—Channing very decidedly attached himself to the first. Woe to him who would not follow his example, but would desert for outgrown prejudices the henceforth incontrovertible cause of modern democracy! But taking this side, we should not be blind to the dangers of the path which democratic nations are treading, nor unjust to the entirely different

way in which the past has understood civilization. If we could once for all make up our minds to sacrifice some few in view of the necessities of the common work; if we admitted, as antiquity did, that society is composed essentially of some thousands of individuals living a full life, while the rest existed merely to procure this life for this small number, the problem would be infinitely simplified, and would be susceptible of a very much higher solution. We should not have to reckon a crowd of humiliating details which democracy is compelled to think of. The loftiness of a civilization is usually in inverse ratio to the number of those who share in it; intellectual culture ceases to rise the moment it is anxious to spread; the crowd pouring into cultivated society almost always depresses its level. These are reflections which it is permitted to make without incurring the reproach of denying the most irresistible tendencies of the present age; we will add even that the peculiar character of France, a character which here we mean neither to praise nor to disparage, does not allow us to suppose that the ideas of Channing could be applied there, unless very greatly restricted.

These ideas, in fact, suppose, or at least aim at creating an enlightened population, rather than a grand culture. Now, in regard to intelligence, France is a country essentially aristocratic. The moral temper of France combines extremes; a common people generally below the average, and by the side of this common people an aristocracy of intellect to which, probably, no other can be compared. Nowhere do we find at once so much mind and so little taste for liberal things. Education, as Channing understands it, would, among us, be too strong for some, too weak for others. In religion, Channing's ideas, and I mean no reproach to them when I say it, seem to me no better adapted to our country. France is almost destitute of religious spontaneity. Had France been capable of

originating a religious movement of its own, it would have become Protestant. Never will circumstances be as favourable as they were in the sixteenth century; never will more heroism be displayed. Well! France, we must say it with regret, rejected Protestantism as uncongenial to its nature. . France is the most orthodox country in the world, for it is the most indifferent to religion. To innovate in theology, is to believe in theology. Now, France has too much mind ever to be a theological country. Heresy has no business there: the only great heresiarch it has produced, Calvin, met with no success till he had passed its frontiers. It is greatly to be feared, that the miserable abortiveness of all the attempts which have been proposed more recently to modify the forms and the spirit of Catholicism among us, is an indication of the fate reserved for undertakings of the same kind in the future.

In religion, as in everything, France desires the universal, and cares little for the delicate and the distinguished. Precisely because of its profound piety it loves not the small sects, the separatists, the religions of chapels and cliques, which the English race so greatly delights in. Religious controversy is bad taste in France: it does not comprehend how people can dispute on such small matters. The argument against Protestantism which the theologians draw from its perpetual divisions, and from the new sects which it produces without ceasing, as if this were not really a sign of life and of religious activity, as if uniformity of belief were not almost always caused by mental abasement, this argument, I say, is considered in France quite decisive. This is the reason why, after every effort made to stir its indifference, France falls back more heavily than ever into Catholicism or incredulity. This country is absolute in everything: it must have sharply cut theses which give it room to plant its rhetoric and satisfy its taste for general declamation. The wise men see and desire something

better: but the wise men are not of their country. The philosophy of the eighteenth century, which is something eminently French, is in one sense profoundly Catholic through its universal tendency, its lack of criticism, its indifference to fine distinctions, and its claim to substitute another infallibility for theological infallibility.

We cannot hope, then, it seems to me, that the ideas of Channing are destined to gather a very large company of adherents among us. He understood this himself. His letters to MM. Sismondi and de Gerando betray a constant mindfulness of France, and in the midst of sentiments expressing a lively sympathy, let but little hope stream out. "I wish," he wrote to the latter, "to put a question to you, to which you will reply, I hope, with perfect frankness. Are the religious views unfolded in my volume in any respect applicable to the needs and to the condition of France? I am not sorry to read in your letter that the English sects do not succeed in extending themselves among you. They can give but a poor form of religion. For some time past England has made little progress in the higher truths. Her missionaries, if people listened to them, would force France backward three centuries. I think that religion, when it shall revive among you, will appear in a diviner form. I think that France, after so many efforts after progress, will not resume the worm-eaten theology of the ages of antiquity."—"I neither hope nor desire," he writes to M. Sismondi, "that Christianity should revive in France under its ancient forms. Something better is needed. . . . One of the greatest means of restoring Christianity is to break the habit, almost universal in France, of identifying it with Catholicism, or with the old Protestantism. Another method is to show how entirely it is in harmony with the spirit of liberty, of philanthropy, of progress, and to make it appear that these principles demand the aid of Christianity for their full

development. The identity of this religion with the most extended benevolence needs especially to be understood. Unless Christianity fulfils all these conditions, I cannot desire its success."—"Whence shall come our safety?" he says again. "That is the question that incessantly arises in my mind. Will the world receive the impulse of new reformers, or of new institutions? Will the work be accomplished by a silent force acting in the bosom of the masses, or will great convulsions, overturning the actual state of things, be necessary, as at the fall of the Roman empire, to introduce a reform worthy of the name? Sometimes I fear that this latter method will get the lead, so profound seems to me the corruption of the Church and of society."

These doubts respecting the religious future of the Old World were never dissipated for him. He comprehended that his liberal and untraditional Christianity was good for a young territory where another plan of humanity, if I may venture to say so, was starting, but would be inapplicable to our old civilization, in which everybody is anti-quarian in his way. He remained faithful to America. There, indeed, his ideas seem to us to have an immense future. The United States are perhaps destined to exhibit for the first time, before the eyes of the world, a religion, enlightened, purely individual, creating honest people, and totally free from metaphysical pretensions. The name of Channing will no doubt be attached to this foundation, not as that of the chief of a school, he would have been the first to refuse that honour, but as that of one of the men in whom the new spirit first found complete and attractive expression.

If the problem of the universe were to be resolved by rectitude of heart, simplicity, moderation of mind, Channing would have resolved it; but other qualities are necessary for that, and Channing, who received them perhaps

from nature, as far as nature gives them, did not find himself in the intellectual atmosphere which develops them, and makes them bear fruit. We will say, first and foremost, that nothing is worth so much as honesty, goodness, true piety, those essential endowments of beautiful souls. "When God formed the heart of man, he put into it, first of all, goodness, as the proper characteristic of the divine nature, and as a mark of that beneficent hand from which we proceed."* Goodness, however, is not adequate to solve the problem of things. Its part is exceedingly lovely, to console this life, but not to extract its secret. For this, knowledge and genius are as necessary as elevation of heart and purity of soul. A world without knowledge and without genius is as incomplete as a world without goodness. The second condition is pretty much all that Channing comprehended, and here too he sinned in regarding things as being much more simple than they really are.

God forbid that I should seem to discourage the noble spirits who, justly impressed with the imperfection of our social state, desire its reform, and pray for a religion better suited to their needs! Should their efforts have no other result than the improvement and consolation of a few chosen souls, would they not be sufficiently rewarded? But I dare not hope that their influence will be wide or really social. Henceforth there seems to be no room for new and original speculations in the domain of theology, nor does the religious condition of humanity appear to be susceptible of very considerable change. Bouddhism, it is true, seems likely to disappear, and Islamism will be eternal only in the Arab race; but it is hard to believe that the balance of the three great branches of Christianity, which the centuries have founded—the Latin, or Catholic Church, the Greek, or Orthodox Church, Protestantism—

* Bossuet.

is in the future to be disturbed in any marked degree. Will the relations of philosophy and Christianity, however, be altered? Will either of these two forms of human thought succeed in absorbing the other? Or will a lasting peace reconcile their conflicting pretensions? We have no expectation of this either. Philosophy will always belong to a minority, inappreciable in numbers, but the suppression of which would inevitably involve the destruction, at the same time, of civilization. To sustain these rival powers as they front each other, not to discourage those who wish to reconcile them, and yet not to be too confident of the reconciliation of enemies who will fall out the next day, is the only course that can be laid down by strictly critical minds in our time. It would be unjust to reproach the past with not having practised a tolerance which is the result, good or bad, of the intellectual state that we are passing through, but no less certain is it that liberty is the only religious code of modern times, and we can hardly conceive how humanity, after being accustomed to regard its beliefs as purely relative, should again fall into the habit of taking them for absolute truth.

M. FEUERBACH AND THE NEW HEGELIAN SCHOOL.

EVERY considerable movement on the field of human opinions is worthy of interest even when we attach no great value to the mass of ideas that causes it. On this plea, the man who is devoted to critical researches cannot decline to notice the labours of the New Hegelian School on Christianity, although these labours do not always bear a strictly scientific character, and although the fancy of the humourist has often more share in them than the severe method of the historian.

The repugnance of the new German school to Christianity dates from Goethe, Pagan by nature, and especially by literary method. Goethe could have little relish for the æsthetics which substituted the slave's coarse frock for the freeman's toga, the sickly virgin for the antique Venus, the meagre image of a crucified man torn by four nails, for the ideal perfection of the human form represented by the gods of Greece. Inaccessible to fear and to grief, Jupiter was truly the god of this great man, and we are not surprised to see him place the colossal head of this god before his bed, where the rising sun could fall on it, in order that in the morning he might address to it his prayer.

No less decidedly did Hegel pronounce in favour of the religious ideal of the Hellenes and against the intrusion of the Syrian or Galilean elements. The legend of the Christ seems to him to have been conceived on the same plan with the Alexandrine biography of Pythagoras; it has a place, he thinks, in the sphere of the most vulgar realism, but

none in a world of poetry: it is a mixture of shabby mysticism and of pale chimeras, such as we find among fantastical people who have no fine imagination. The Old and New Testaments have no æsthetic value in his eyes.

Haine It is the theme that so often roused the spirit of Henri Heine. The learned school of pure *Germanists* (MM. Gervinus, Lassen, etc.) who, to borrow the ingenious expression of Ozanam, cannot pardon Christian gentleness for having spoiled their bellicose ancestors for them, has been full of the same feeling. But M. Louis Feuerbach* is, without doubt, the most forward, if not the most correct expression of the antipathy we speak of, and if the nineteenth century is to witness the end of the world, he certainly must be called the Antichrist.

M. Feuerbach comes very near defining Christianity as a perversion of human nature, and Christian æsthetics as a perversion of the most secret instincts of the heart. The perpetual lamentations of Christians over their sins, seem to him intolerable fooleries; the humility and poverty of the monastic life are, to him, the worship of dirt and ugliness, and he would cheerfully say like Rutilius Numatianus: "Is this sect, then, I ask, less deadly than the poison of Circe? Circe changed bodies, now they are spirits that are changed into swine."

We say it aloud, and with the more confidence, as we wish here to meet considerations of art with views of the same order only, the critical spirit cannot admit so absolute judgment. Wherever there is originality, a real expansion

* The most characteristic writings of M. Feuerbach and the new Hegelian school have been collected and translated by M. Hermann Ewerbeck, in two volumes; one entitled, "What is Religion?" the other, "What is the Bible according to the new German philosophy?" Paris: 1850.—It is a pity that the translator, whose disinterestedness merits praise, should have mixed with writings that may be worth knowing, fragments of no value, some of which, too, can, in no sense, be taken seriously.

of any instincts of human nature, we must recognize and adore beauty. Sad, as sad as you please, this æsthetic has its boldness and its grandeur. Clumsy and homely as compared with the learned legends of Greece, this legend, aside from its matchless morality, even when regarded as with the eyes of the artist, possesses a great charm of simplicity. Formerly, good taste refused the name of beauty to everything that did not reach perfection of form; such is not our criticism. We excuse barbarism wherever we find the expression of a new phase of feeling, and a genuine breath of the human soul.

Would to God that M. Feuerbach had bathed in richer fountains of life than those of his exclusive and haughty Germanism! Ah! if seated on the ruins of Mount Palatine, or of Mount Celius, he had heard the sound of the everlasting bells linger and die on the deserted hills, where Rome stood once; or if from the solitary shore of the Lido he had listened to the chimes of St. Mark, as they breathed themselves away on the lagunes; if he had seen Assisi and its mystic marvels, its double basilica and the grand legend of the second Christ of the middle ages, drawn by the pencil of Cimabue or Giotto; if he had satiated himself with the long, sweet look of Perugino's Virgins, or at San Domenico of Siena, had seen Saint Catherine in ecstasy; no, M. Feuerbach would not thus cast opprobrium on one-half the poetry of mankind, nor would he exclaim as if he were exorcising the shade of Iscariot!

M. Feuerbach's error lies almost always in his æsthetic judgments. The facts are often presented by him with sufficient delicacy, but always pronounced on with revolting severity, and with a determination to find everything Christian, ugly, atrocious, or ridiculous. We may agree with him on many points of detail, and yet share none of his views on the general morality of history. Yes, the great difference between Hellenism and Christianity, is that

Hellenism is natural, and Christianity super-natural. The religions of antiquity were nothing more than the state, the family, art, morals, raised to a high and poetic expression; they know nothing of renunciation, of sacrifice; they did not divide life; the distinction of sacred and profane had no existence for them. Antiquity, in its mode of feeling, is straightforward and simple; Christianity, on the contrary, ever on its guard against nature, seeks the strange, the paradoxical. Abstinence, in its view, is better than enjoyment, happiness must be sought in its opposite; the wisdom of the flesh, that is to say natural wisdom, is folly; the folly of the cross is wisdom. Are the writings of Saint Paul, from end to end, anything but a deliberate reversal of human meanings, an anticipative comment on Tertullian's *credo quia absurdum*? The distinction of the flesh and the spirit, unknown to the ancients, for whom human life preserved its harmonious unity, kindled from that moment the war between man and himself, which eighteen centuries have not quenched.

Hence, strange overthrows compensated by admirable moral conquests. Vagaries which antiquity had known only in connection with its most superstitious rites, become contagious. On what has the meditation of Christian piety, the imagination of the enthusiasts preferred to exercise itself? Is it on the Trinity, on the Holy Spirit, on those controversial dogmas which are received as a sealed formula? No; it is on the little child, the *Santo Bambino* in his manger; no saint that has not kissed its feet; Saint Catherine, of Siena, espoused him, and this other saint clasped him in her arms. It is on the Passion, on the suffering Christ; no saint that has not felt the print in his pierced hands, in his open side; Saint Madeline of Pazzi beheld him in dream, shedding five fountains of blood from his five wounds; this other saw his heart, bloody and transfixed. It is on Mary; Mary has sufficed to satisfy the

craving for love in ten centuries of ascetics. Mary has entered by full title into the Trinity. She far excels that third forgotten person, the Holy Spirit, with neither lovers nor adorers. She completes the divine family, for it would have been a marvel if the feminine element, in its triumph, had not succeeded in reaching even the bosom of God, and between the Father and the Son, introducing the mother.*

At the same time the ideal of morality changes, but in one sense becomes elevated and noble. Paganism, taking human nature to be upright and sound, consecrated the whole of it, even in its baser parts, in that lay disorder and error. Christianity, on its side, by placing nature too absolutely under anathema, fostered that taste for the abject and the ugly which led the middle age astray. The man of antiquity, Aristides or Solon, swims tranquilly in the current of life, his perfections and his imperfections belong to our nature. The Christian man climbs upon the column of the Stylites, withdraws from everything, and using only so much of the ground as is necessary to plant his foot on, suspends himself between heaven and earth. The ideal of beauty degenerates in pureness but gains in depth. That ideal is no longer an ennobled nature, the perfection of the real, the flowering of the actual; it is the anti-natural, it is the corpse of a dead God, it is the pallid and veiled *Addolorata*; it is the Madeleine torturing her flesh. Had one proposed to the artist of antiquity one of the subjects which Christianity delights in, the Virgin, the Crucifix, he would have repelled it as out of the question. The *Ceres dolorosa* is beautiful as a woman and as a mother; but the Virgin! . . . her conception, her delivery are supernatural; her brothers are angels; she has on earth no sister, no hus-

* The representations of the *incoronata*, in which Mary, placed between the Father and the Son, receives the crown from the hand of the former, and the homage of the latter, describe the true Trinity of Christian piety.

band. So, should Christian art, returning to profane tradition, go to seek the types of the Madonna at Albano or at Transteveré, it would be a sacrilege against which the Christian conscience would justly make outcry. Prometheus nailed to his rock is still beautiful. But Jesus on the Cross! . . . If you try to express in that attenuated body the ideal of human forms, the harmonious proportions of the Dionysus or the Apollo, if you give to that thorn-crowned head the high serenity of the Olympian Jupiter, it is an absurdity and almost an impiety. The Byzantine Church was consistent in maintaining stubbornly the thesis of the Christ's physical repulsiveness. He must be described as lean, lank, and bloody; let them count all his bones, let them take him for a leper, a worm of the ground and no man. "We have regarded him as a leper. . . . He hath no form nor comeliness. . . . Despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Yes, all this is strange, new, unheard of, and Saint Paul was quite right in calling it scandal and folly. But all this belongs to human nature. All this came in its season, all this issued at its time from the eternal seed, which contains things beautiful. A great modification took place in human nature. A warm, damp wind blew from the south, and relaxed its rigidity. Love changed its object; to the enthusiasm for beauty succeeded enthusiasm for suffering, the apotheosis of the man of sorrows, experienced in weaknesses, the "divine leper," as Bossuet calls him.*

It is a serious mistake to cast on antiquity the reproach of Materialism. Antiquity is neither materialistic nor spiritualistic, it is human. The life of antiquity so serene, so gracious in its fair proportions, had no outlook towards the

* This side of Christianity has never been grasped with more energy and originality than by Bossuet in the admirable sermons "On the Passion," and "On the Compassion of the Holy V.egin."

infinite. Look at those charming little houses of Pompeii, how gay, how finished, but how narrow and pent up! Everywhere repose and joy, everywhere images of happiness and pleasure. This, however, does not satisfy us; we have no longer a conception of unsaddened life. Penetrated as we are with our supernaturalistic ideas, and our thirst for the Infinite, this circumscribed art, this simple morality, this plan of life so bounded in every direction seems to us a confined realism. Castor and Pollux, Diana and Minerva are to us cold images, because they represent nature in its healthy and normal state. But let us be on our guard; these grand airs of abstinence and sacrifice are often but a refinement of instincts which feed on the opposite qualities. Christian Spiritualism is, at bottom, far more sensual than what is called the materialism of antiquity,* and sometimes looks like lassitude. The Dorian Artemis, that masculine young girl who touched the severe Hippolytus, always seemed to me more austere than the "dear Saint Elizabeth," with whom M. de Montalembert became so desperately enamoured. Those who have visited Naples may have seen in the Chapel della Pietà de' Sangri, a *Pudicizia* covered with a long veil, which clings to her whole person in a way to suggest, beneath the marble folds, the form rendered more seductive by mystery. On the other hand, in the Museum of the Vatican, there is an antique Modesty, half nude, but veiled by its severe beauty. . . . Which, think you, is really the more chaste? Greece, with exquisite tact perceived in everything the golden mean, the flitting shadowy line which is seized at moments, but which cannot be held. Moderation, indeed, appears cold

* I am speaking, understand, only of the high and pure antiquity of Greece; I should observe, too, that the present question is, first of all, one of æsthetics and of taste, and must be settled by an examination of works of art and poetry.

and wearisome in the long run ; we tire of proportion and good taste ; the perfectly pure types no longer satisfy ; we wish the strange, the superhuman, the supernatural.

It is not through the fault of individuals or of systems that the religious sentiments undergo these profound revolutions. Man does not voluntarily leave the pleasant and easy parts of the plain for the sharp and romantic peaks of the mountain. He does this because measure and proportion representing only the finite become insufficient for the heart that longs for the infinite. So long as humanity incloses itself in just and strict limits, it is at rest and happy in its mediocrity ; as soon as it hearkens to more ample needs, become exacting and unhappy, but in one sense more noble, it will in art and in morality prefer suffering, the unsatisfied desire, the vague and painful feelings which have their birth in the infinite, to the full and complete satisfaction which a finished work procures.

But if there be one incurable malady, it is, thank God, this. The delicate are unhappy ; but there is no cure for delicacy. We can acknowledge that we have bent the mind away, but we cannot straighten it again. And then aberration has so many charms and correctness is so tedious ! An ancient temple has incontestably a purer beauty than a Gothic church, and yet we spend hours in the latter without fatigue, and we are tired if we stay five minutes in the former ! That proves, according to M. Feuerbach, that we are perverted ; but what is to be done about it ?

Had M. Feuerbach been content to show these contrasts serenely and tenderly ; if, satisfied with curiously noting the alternations of human feeling, he had not met the often gratuitous enthusiasm of the believer with a hate more gratuitous still, we could not fairly treat him with much severity. But the impartial philosopher cannot subscribe to the wholesale condemnation which M. Feuerbach launches at eighteen centuries of the history of the human

mind; for he must consider, it is the human mind itself which is on trial. It is useless for him to turn his hatred against the words Christianity, Theology, etc. What then has made theology? What has made Christianity? Humanity accepts no chains but those it imposes on itself. Humanity has done everything, and we believe has done everything well.

Besides, it is not supernaturalism alone that falls under the criticism of the new German school; M. Feuerbach and all the philosophers of this school declare without hesitation that theism, natural religion, every system, in a word, that admits anything transcendental, must be placed on the same footing with supernaturalism. To believe in God and in the immortality of the soul is as superstitious in his view as to believe in the Trinity and in miracles. The criticism of the skies is according to him but criticism of the earth; theology must become anthropology. All regard for a higher world, every look that man throws beyond himself and actual things, every religious feeling under whatever form manifested, is an illusion and nothing else. In order not to be severe towards such a philosophy, we are willing to see in it merely a misunderstanding. At the head of the second edition of his "Essence of Christianity," M. Feuerbach has written: "By this book, I have undone myself with God and with the world." We think that to some extent, he is to blame for this, and that had he been willing, God and the world would have forgiven him. Seduced by the pernicious tone which prevails in the German Universities, and which might fittingly be called the *pedantry of audacity*, many upright minds and honest souls claim without deserving the honours of Atheism. When a German boasts of his impiety, he must never be taken at his word. Germany is not capable of being irreligious; religion, that is to say, aspiration after the ideal world, is the very foundation of its nature. When it

would be atheistic, it is so devotedly and with a kind of unction. But if you cultivate the worship of beauty and truth; if the sanctity of the moral speaks to your heart; if all beauty and all truth bring you back to the hearth of holy life; and if arrived there you forbear speech, you cover your head, you purposely confound thought and language in order to say nothing partial in presence of the infinite, how dare you talk of atheism? But if your faculties vibrating in unison have never rendered that grand peculiar tone which we call God, I have nothing more to say; you are wanting in the essential and characteristic element of our nature.

To those who, planting themselves on substance, ask me: "Is he, or is he not, this God of yours?" Ah! I shall reply, God! It is he that is, and all the rest but seems to be. Granting even that for us philosophers another word might be preferable; besides the unfitness of abstract words to express clearly enough real existence, there would be an immense inconvenience in thus cutting ourselves off from the sources of poetry in the past, and in separating ourselves by our speech from the simple who adore so well in their way. The word GOD possessing as it does the respect of humanity, the word having been long sanctioned by it, and having been employed in the finest poems, to abandon it would be to overturn all the usages of language. Tell the simple to live a life of aspiration after truth, beauty, moral goodness—the words would convey no meaning to them. Tell them to love God, not to offend God, they will understand you wonderfully. God, Providence, Immortality! good old words, a little clumsy perhaps, which philosophy will interpret in finer and finer senses; but which it will never fill the place of to advantage. Under one form or another, God will always be the sum of our supersensual needs, the *category of the ideal*, the form; that is, under which we conceive the

ideal, as space and time are the *categories of bodies*, that is to say, the form under which we conceive of bodies. In other words, man placed in the presence of beautiful, good, or true things, goes out of himself, and, caught up by a celestial charm, annihilates his pitiful personality, is exalted, is absorbed. What is that, if it be not adoration?

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IN MODERN SOCIETY.

MANY among so-called enlightened people have arrived in our day at a singular conclusion. Persuaded that universal pacification is the supreme good, they think that every cause of division between men should be prevented by the state, and they shut their eyes to the questions which threaten to disturb their happy quiet. China is, though they do not know it, the ideal they propose to themselves. There each one has his official title. Each has a right, after death, to the consideration that he enjoyed during his life; there every magistrate is upright, every governor a good administrator, all kings have been fathers; if they have not been, no one dares say so, and there is a story that when the old sages found the trace of some misdeed committed by a sovereign they prudently wiped it out. In this way China, at the first glance, looked like the paradise of wise men; and the eighteenth century, which took seriously this sanctimonious foolery of the annals of the Celestial Empire, thought it had found the model people. In reality, China, with its mandarins, its admirable police, its competition of graduates, its widely diffused public instruction, has always been inferior to our West even in its worst days. When we burned men for theological subtleties, we certainly were very far from that rational indifference to the highest things which, in the eyes of a disciple of Confucius, is the essential condition of happiness; but races must be judged by the sum of their history. China, in consequence of this

stubborn optimism, is dying, not of old age, but of an indefinitely prolonged childhood. The Western nations, with their burning fever after the absolute and the righteous, the inquisition, the revolutionary tribunal, terrorism, are young, mistresses of the world. Capable of great loves and hates, they owe it to their very excesses that they have in the past something to detest, and in the future an ideal to pursue. The words *faith* and *hope* have a meaning for them; they are dogmatic races, accustomed to prefer a thousand things to life, possessed by an invincible confidence in what they believe to be the truth.

That which the superficial politicians of the last century, and of the beginning of this, most admired in the institutions of China, was the pains-taking caution of legislation in setting aside questions of religion. A sort of academy of the moral sciences, regulating once for all man's relations to the infinite; a central power, laying a wise interdict on everything that could get into the heart and beget discussion; a religion of ceremonies and innocent parades appeared to them the master-piece of a wise administration. In the persuasion, more or less openly avowed, that enjoyment is the end of life, they regarded as marplots any who called up problems of a higher order. Luther and Calvin were dangerous men, who had occasioned the shedding of a great deal of blood. They came near charging Pilate with having acted too feebly, and the commissaries of the Roman police with not having exercised a sufficiently close watch over the catacombs. All propagandism was crime. One of the vital articles in the Concordat laid it down that preachers in their instructions should not allow themselves directly or indirectly to arraign the other creeds authorized by the state. Lively and apparently aggressive reactions have proved that this narrow tendency of a few minds was by no means the tendency of Europe, and the West would never, for the sake of living in peace, resign itself to the

absence of all motive for living. The struggle will change faces a thousand times; the parties will, we must hope, abandon the unlawful weapons they have too often used; but the war will not end. What forms will be assumed by that eternal discord, the germs of which God himself has sowed in humanity? If religions have a future, what is that future? How limit without extinguishing the spark of conflagration, which every great community carries in its bosom? How can the proportions of the religious families that divide the world among themselves be altered? Some recent works have called attention to all these points. A writer long known by works of individual and daring thought, M. Salvador, has published one of the most original books that has appeared for years on religious questions. A young and brilliant publicist, whose noble heart is capable of embracing all that is liberal, M. Prevost-Paradol, in reprinting a paper published more than thirty years ago, by one of the men of the last generation who had the clearest anticipations of the future, has connected with it views full of truth and force on the condition of the different Christian communities. An anonymous writer has set forth with remarkable vigour the consequences that result from our legislation on religion, and shows what is to be understood by religious liberty. Finally, contemporaneous events, which we shall not discuss here—for it is awkward, before one is asked, to propose solutions of problems that have not been raised, issues for situations that have not been taken—have shown to what extent religious questions are still mixed up with the world's movement; how much account politics must make of them, and how inadequate the maxims hitherto followed have become in the face of the new facts which have occurred. The question is, are we authorized to elicit from all these facts any light on the possible transformations of the religious code of humanity?

I

The first question that presents itself, when we reflect on the religious future of the modern world, is this: Can we believe that there will appear a new form of religion, a complete and original expression of the needs of the new age—or will they still needs seek to find satisfaction in various modifications of the existing creeds? In other words, outside of Judaism, of Christianity, of Islamism—which, for twelve hundred years, have had the close field of civilization to themselves—will there be formed another religion, no more related to these three than Jesus was to Moses, or Mahomet to Jesus? This problem assumes a singular prominence in the book of M. Salvador. Equally removed from orthodoxy, which is shut up in the creeds of one of the three religions, and from the free symbolism which interprets them in senses more and more refined, and from Deism, which preserves but their dried skeletons, and from criticism, which endeavours to determine their weight in the collective movement of humanity, M. Salvador holds a place apart in the religious labour of our time. If, as some persons think, our disease consists in an excess of the historical spirit, M. Salvador is more exempt from such a fault than any of his contemporaries. A nature complete, grand, strong, full of the genius of his race; not concerned if he raises a smile; caring little for our fine shades of thought and exactness; a stranger to that nice intuition of the past which German criticism has inaugurated, M. Salvador is truly an original, an innovator in religion. He has but half-knowledge; he borrows freely; he is a compiler. In the sixteenth century, in Holland, he would have held a place by the side of the Spinozas and the Acostas; astray in an age of analysis, he remains, I fear, an empty shade. M. Salvador was the first man in

France who approached the problem of the origins of Christianity. He did it with inadequate learning, but with a lively appreciation of some of its data. He brought to his task what we may call an endowment of race, that sort of political insight which has rendered the Semites alone capable of great religious combinations. This race seizes the general leadings of human affairs, not as we do by analysis and thorough study of details, but by a kind of comprehensive glance, like Elias's view from the top of Carmel. The philosophy of history is a Jewish product, in one sense the last phase of the prophetic spirit, prophecy, towards the epoch of the Seleucidæ, becoming apocalyptic vision, and apocalyptic vision, as first given to us by the unknown author of the Book of Daniel, directly ushering in the Abbé Joachim, Bossuet, Vico, Herder. The theory of the four empires, which, since Bossuet, has been the basis of the historical theory taught in our schools, was first stated in the Book of Daniel. An acquaintance with the Mussulman philosophy of history, derived from the *Prolegomena* of Ibn-Khaldoun, which M. de Slane has translated, will beget surprise at the grand comprehensiveness of view which this class of Unitarian religions could inspire, long before any idea of exact historical science was unfolded. In our time, Abd-el-Kader retains this faculty of his race in the highest degree; he is the prophet of the Semitic autumn, the Jeremiah of Islam. M. Salvador has often appeared to me in an analogous light. Take him on the side of exactness and decision, you will find him odd, frequently puerile. His combinations, stamped with that species of abstract imagination that is characteristic of the Jewish people, are often arbitrary, and remind us of Philo and the Cabbala. His style, admirable when reflecting a vivid imagination, is sometimes rough and hard; but we must remember that the prime condition of fertile combinations is indefiniteness. Mahomet would not have combined

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Christianity and Judaism so well, had ne known how to read and been directly acquainted with the Bible. The religious combination of the future, supposing the future to have any surprise in store for us here, will certainly not come from critics and theologians. Ardent minds, looking at things through the veil of their passionate dreams, are best prepared for that.

M. Salvador is, without exception, the man who, in our time, has entertained the largest views of such a renovation. In warmth of soul, revolutionary ardour in religion, and facility of movement amid confusion, he occasionally reminds us of St. Paul. An indifferent historian, he excels us all in practical understanding of religious matters. Most of us are too good "Christians" to be devoid of all religious prejudice, of all habitual or sympathetic attachment. M. Salvador seems to us very much what the Jews seemed to the pagans of Greece and Rome: an unbeliever, a man detached from tradition, a scorner of the gods. How original and sprightly the account of his religious calling! What prophet of Israel ever affirmed more boldly the future of his race? "Approach—they say to the Jew and tell us thy name.—My name? My name is Jew; name that signifies, man of praise, changeless adorer of Being, the Only One, the Eternal.—Thine age? Age? Two thousand years older than Jesus Christ.—Thy profession? I set aside the sad professions which have been invented for me, the stamp and consequences of which I still too plainly show: my own destiny, my traditional calling is this:—I pledge the holy prerogative of the name of Law, and I am the living conserver of the old nobility and of the legitimacy attached by divine right to the name, the peculiar name, of people.—Raise thy hand, and swear that thou wilt speak without hate and without fear; that thou wilt tell the truth.—I have certain knowledge that in spite of her wondrous grandeur, Rome is an upstart

city, not the true Jerusalem. For the universal glory of God, as well as for the definite welfare of the world, Rome must be providentially transformed, must be by sovereign act displaced.—I know, for a certainty, that the divinity of Jesus Christ is to be radically modified, or openly, in a godly and large measure, corrected. After you have rendered to the people what is due to the name of the people, render to the Eternal what is due to the name of the Eternal alone. I know, too, and have long known, that the other nations will have room to break the new bread, to inaugurate the new rest, the Sabbath of the Eternal, to celebrate new passovers. This is my free and lawful testimony. And moreover, what I know by the spirit of tradition, by the spirit of justice and intelligence, this I desire with desire inextinguishable; and this shall take place by the spirit of moral force, by supreme necessity and divine decree."

Every great thing that has been done in the world, has been done in the name of extravagant hopes, and the Jewish people presents aspects so strange, that we should never speak of it lightly; still, there is a past whose glory excludes the very thought of a future. How can we speak of the future of Athens? What destiny would not be dark for Greece in view of what she has been? On the same principle, as regards the Jews, I can hardly consent to speak of anything but their past achievements. Since Jesus Christ, the Jews, in my opinion, have done nothing more than preserve a book, from the day when they committed the Bible to European science; from the day when they taught Hebrew to Luther and the Buxtorfs, they have had nothing more of consequence to do. We grant, that since this time, Judaism has given to the world a remarkable number of excellent men, distinguished men, men indeed of the first order, but that privilege it shares with every small church. These small churches, through force of

circumstances, become aristocracies, in which light more quickly spreads, and in which routine and prejudice are more easily pierced.

While I admire as much as M. Salvador the part which the Jewish people have played in the past, I cannot agree with him touching the part he assigns to them in the future. I believe in a reformation of Christianity, but that reformation will not consist in a return to Judaism. In general, M. Salvador fails to do justice to the powerful genius of Christianity taken as the whole. I persist in thinking, spite of some lively rejoinders, that Christianity is not a continuation of Judaism, but rather a reaction against the dominant temper of Judaism, effected within the bosom of Judaism itself. Whatever may have been the views of its founder in this respect, it must be acknowledged that the attitude of Saint Paul, and still more the prevailing tendency of the primitive churches, are most unequivocal. Judaism furnished the leaven which caused the fermentation, but the fermentation went on outside of it. The Hellenic and Roman elements, in the first place, then the Germanic and Celtic elements gained the predominance entirely, made Christianity exclusively theirs, and unfolded it in a way by no means consistent with its first beginning. Schleiermacher and the Catholic school of Munich, M. Lassaulx, for example, are right in saying, that Socrates and Plato are more truly our ancestors and nearer to Jesus Christ, than the rude Bedouins of the time of Joshua and David, or than the Jews of the Pharisaic stamp, the genuine Jews, narrow, bitter, exclusive. M. de Bunsen is right in thinking that the future perfection of Christianity will consist in a further and further remove from Judaism, to give predominance to the genius of the Indo-European race. It would be unjust to forget the noble service rendered to humanity by the Jewish and the Arab people in cutting with a bold stroke of the scissors, the inextricable

akin of the ancient mythologies ; but that is a negative service, for the full value of which we must thank the excellence of the European races. Islamism, falling as it did on ground that was none of the best, has, on the whole, done as much harm as good to the human race ; it has stifled everything by its dry and desolating simplicity. Christianity escaped this danger solely because the Semitic element in it has always been resisted, and at last has been nearly banished.

In consequence of his Jewish, rather than Christian tendencies, St. Salvador carries a very absolute temper into his judgments on religious questions. He is unjust towards Protestantism because it publishes no claim to divine right in everything. He does not comprehend the future of a free Christianity as the Germanic people understand it ; he makes too little account of England, of the United States ; he does not see how the Anglo-Saxon race is overrunning the earth. The separation of the spiritual and the temporal, of which Jewish and Mussulman society had scarcely an idea, and which has been the salvation of Christian Europe, M. Salvador accepts with some reserve. He would be glad if they might one day be united again, which may God forefend ! A certain theocratic leaning peeps out here and there. In this, M. Salvador shows himself still a true Semite. The two great forms of Semitic civilization have this peculiarity : that they leave no place for civil government in our sense of the term. Power, with Jew as with Arab, always comes from God ; a deplorable system, which has committed the Mussulman people to despotism, without a shadow of guarantee or of Constitution, and has brought about that frightful social state which Islam has presented for the last six or seven hundred years. Theocracy, by ascribing a spiritual origin to power, pleases lofty minds, but it contains a secret poison which renders it always deadly ; it can produce none but absolute dynasties.

The Germanic principle, that power in its different degrees belongs to him who exercises it, mean as it looks, is really the better, for in this view, personal right becomes every thing. Each one has his charter, each one is king in his castle. So much at least is certain, that this is the only idea that has succeeded in planting liberty in the world.

Here is the great difference between M. Salvador and the rest of us liberals. M. Salvador wishes unity and stability; he contemplates a spiritual power; he would like a symbol and an established dogma. The rest of us would prefer that each should have his own creed; we dread too close unions as injurious to liberty. Like all exalted natures, M. Salvador loves unity. In our judgment, on the contrary, division is the condition of freedom. It would be in the power of some one man to melt into one the nations, the churches, the sects, the schools, which it would be necessary to oppose to him. The ancient Roman world perished through its unity; the safety of the modern world will depend on its diversity. M. Salvador asks the age to look towards the east and south; we others say to him, flee towards the north and the west. The East has never produced anything as good as we have. How much Jew is there in our Germanic and Celtic Christianity; in Saint Francis d'Assisi, in Saint Gertrude, Saint Bernard, Saint Elizabeth, and more recently in Vincent De Paul, Schleiermacher, Channing? Would you compare your Esthers and your Mardochees with those flowers that have opened in the romantic and charming atmosphere of our seas and mountains? What Jewish element is there in the book of *The Imitation*, in the monastic life, that prime feature of Christianity, in our saints of the Merovingian epoch, our true Saints? Germans and Celts we will remain; we will keep our *eternal gospel*, Christianity, as our green and cold nature has made it. All the good there is in humanity is grafted on it; all moral progress is identified with it; a

kind of natural crudity, an original sin, so to speak, mark the countries and the races which have not passed under this excellent discipline.

Christianity has thus become almost the synonym for religion. All endeavour outside of this noble and gracious Christian tradition will be sterile. Jesus has founded religion in humanity as Socrates founded philosophy in it; as Aristotle founded science. There was philosophy before Socrates, and science before Aristotle. Since Socrates, and since Aristotle, philosophy and science have made immense progress, but it has all been builded on the foundation that they laid. So, before Jesus, religious thought had passed through many a revolution; since Jesus, it has made great conquests. But we have not left behind us, nor shall we leave behind, the essential idea that Jesus originated. He has fixed for all time the conception of pure religion; every building that has been erected, has been erected on his foundation. In this sense, the religion of Jesus is limitless. The Church has had its epochs and its phases; it is confined to creeds which have had, and will have only their day. Jesus has founded the absolute religion, excluding nothing, fixing nothing; his symbols are not final dogmas, but images of indefinite expansion. One searches in vain in the gospels for a theological proposition. All professions of faith are treason to the thought of Jesus, almost as much as the scholasticism of the middle age betrayed Aristotle, in the very act of proclaiming him the solitary master of a finished science. Aristotle, had he assisted at the debates of the Schoolmen, would have rejected this narrow interpretation; he would have been the advocate of progressive science, against routine; he would have taken sides with those who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were his opponents. So, if Jesus still watches the fortunes of the work that he began, he is undeniably not with those who pretend that it is shut up

complete in a few phrases of the catechism, but with those who labour to carry it on. In every order of grandeur the eternal glory is to have laid the corner-stone of progress. It may be that in the physics and in the meteorology of modern times, not one word from Aristotle's treatises, bearing those titles, can be found; none the less does Aristotle remain the founder of natural science. Whatever transformations dogma may undergo, Jesus will still be the author of pure sentiment in religion. The Sermon on the Mount will not be superseded. We will even say that facts are of small moment here; biography is of secondary interest; the idea in such a matter is everything. A document might be dug up which would show that the personal estimate made of Socrates, of Aristotle, of Descartes, has been exaggerated; that they were not the authors of the books or the doctrines attributed to them; we should none the less continue to be Aristotelians or Cartesians. The proper name is but a birth-mark, the exactness of which is of no consequence save to the scholar. No discovery, no system will prevent us from attaching ourselves, as religious men, to the grand intellectual and moral line, at whose head shines rightly or wrongly the name of Jesus. In this sense we are Christians, even though separated at nearly every point from the Christian tradition which has preceded us.

The religious question of the future is thus found to be exceedingly limited. No great wholly original creation of religion will have its birth in our civilization. Attempts after the Saint Simonian sort rest on a misconception. They would give the name of religion to social well-being, industry, things that have nothing to do with religion. What place is there in all this for abnegation, devotion, sacrifice of the real to the ideal, which is the very essence of religion? Not less mistaken are the experiments of the revolutionary school. Revolution is a secular thing

altogether; its last word is the civil code. If America contains ignorance or natural energy enough to start one of those singular movements whose sole title to credence is the endurance of two or three centuries of sarcasm, it may be safely asserted that the surrounding rationalism will be strong enough to prevent its doubling the cape past which blind faith becomes tradition; it will have no point of attachment. Christianity alone then remains in possession of the future. Christianity alone is a whole world; to gain an idea of its future changes, we must study its actual condition and the relative proportions of the parties that are formed in its bosom from time immemorial.

II.

Christianity has been much divided. A result of three centuries of absolutely individual effort, it found the principle of its force in that very division and in the intense activity it produced. The primitive organization of Christianity was in some sort municipal; each Church having a separate existence, and all the Churches being in communication through letters and authorized messengers. The Churches, to tell the truth, did but continue the vast system of synagogues which in the age of Augustus covered the empire, and which has been perpetuated among the Jews nearly to modern times. The vital intercourse of the Jewish communities in the middle age, and in our days too, in the countries where Judaism has preserved its original organization, is the type of what obtained in the Churches at the epoch of Saint Paul, of Saint Ignatius, of Saint Irenæus; the same rivalries, the same cabals, the same vigilance on questions of doctrine, of discipline, of hierarchy. The *Churches* preceded the *Church*, and even when this, become official, aspires to model itself on the

unity of the empire, division is at work in another quarter. A rationalistic opposition party comes to light in Arianism, and for nearly a century holds the fate of the orthodox Church in a balance. When this type of Christianity, too advanced for the age, disappeared, to come to life again after a thousand years, a much deeper opposition, one that implicated races, begins to disclose itself. The Church falls asunder at the dividing line of the two great families of the ancient world. What imperial Rome could not do, Christian Rome succeeded no better in doing. Just as the Latin language, at the very hour it was extending its conquests to Scotland and Ireland, stopped at Naples in front of the Greek line of southern Italy, so the Roman Church found itself powerless before the Greek Church. Photius served merely as the instrument of a historical necessity; the separation was made as early as Constantine. These two branches of Christendom continue their propaganda through the whole middle age; one of them assimilates the Germanic nations, the other the Slavic; long they fought for the empire. The Greek Church, superior in culture to the Latin Church down to the tenth or eleventh century, very soon becomes inferior as a moral force.* Islamism breaks it in pieces; the Slaves whom it has affiliated rouse themselves slowly; the Latin Church in the sixteenth century assumes an immense superiority. This superiority results, like all great revivals, in a schism. The great Christian awakening,—Protestantism occurs in the Latin Church. The force, the depth, the liberty of the

* The first half of the Latin middle age has no one man of such vast reading, and such fine learning as Photius. In the twelfth and thirteenth century, the superiority is with the West; no Byzantine is the equal of Abelard and Roger Bacon. Still in the fourteenth and fifteenth century the Greeks are yet our masters, the Italian renaissance is largely due to them. Plethon and Manuel Paleologus were after all the first men of their time in mental culture.

Germanic genius break forth. This genius, which had submitted reluctantly to the sway of Rome, reasserts its rights, and creates a Christendom after its own fashion, which after many attempts towards the end of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century attains a religious elevation till then unheard of. Germany at this period realized the most beautiful religion that has anywhere been professed, and it is always called Christianity. Thus by the side of the two old orthodoxies, the Greek and the Latin, which remain fettered in their symbols, steps forth a new form of Christianity, whose last consequence, liberal Christianity, is not seen till our own time. Three powers destined always to fight without ever annihilating or so much as weakening each other, *à fortiori* without being able to combine, divide Christendom, and by rescuing it from all exclusive domination, insure its future, the future, too, I venture to say of philosophy and of liberty.

This triple partition of the Christian family, in fact, is not like Arianism, Pelagianism, etc., simply a sectarian division; it corresponds with natural sections, such as in the civilized world are formed by the separation of the Latin, the Germanic, the Greco-Slavic races. All England might be seduced by the shallow criticism of Doctor Pusey, and yet not be reconciled with the Pope. The Greek and Latin theologians might come to an understanding on the *filioque*, but for all that Rome would not rule in Moscow. The futility of the efforts made by these three Churches to absorb one another, is henceforth demonstrated. In the middle ages the Latin Church by the weight of its military superiority oppresses the Greek Church, and the small Oriental Churches that may be considered as attachments to the Greek Church; since the sixteenth century it oppresses them still by the weight of its diplomacy, and by the importance which the exclusive possession of Poland gives it among the Slaves. It breaks whole branches from

them—united Armenians, Maronites, united Greeks. The Turks inflict on the Greek Church what seems an eternal affront; but lo, at the end of four or five hundred years the Greek Church revives; a conquest, which for ages appeared to be of small consequence, the Russian, confers on it at a stroke a primacy equal to that of the Latins. The imaginative and persistent race of the Slaves takes the place of the exhausted Greek race, and in the course of ten centuries the work of Photius appears as a leading phenomenon in the world's history. Protestantism proved no less stubborn. Philip II., Pius V., the duke of Alva, the Jesuits, Louis XIV. dashed themselves against it; the heresy which was pronounced exterminated remains mistress of the most vital portions of Europe. Nothing, then, will come of the mutual struggle of the three Christian families; their equilibrium is as well assured as that of the three great races which share between them the world; their separation will secure the future against the excessive predominance of a single religious power, just as the division of Europe must for ever prevent the return of that *orbis romanus*, that closed circle, which allowed no possible escape from the terrible tyranny that unity always engenders.

Will the spread of these three great Churches over the parts of the world not yet Christianized affect at all their respective positions? In other words, what is the future of the Catholic, the Greco-Russian, and the Protestant missions? Uniform experience justifies a very precise expression of opinion on this point. Few sacrifices are so worthy of respect as those of the missionary; few institutions have rendered or can render to historical and geographical science such great service as missionary institutions. If in our day the Protestant missions are almost alone in the performance of this noble work, in consequence of a shameful indifference to science on the part of the Catholic

missionaries, we must not forget the beautiful Catholic missions of the eighteenth century—those of the Jesuits in China, those of the Italian missionaries in India and Thibet, the Horace della Penna, the Pantin of St. Barthelemy, the Tieffen thaler. Nevertheless, viewed as religious revolutions, missions have always played a secondary part in the history of humanity. That isolated and individual mode of action, which is adopted by the great founders of apostleships, who appear at the commencement of every religion, is insufficient when the first creative glow is passed. Saint Paul would not be a missionary to-day. Not an important Christian community can be mentioned as the work of modern missions. The Churches of China and Japan were built on the sand. Neither the heroism of Francis Xavier, nor the adroitness and sometimes the mental largeness of the Jesuits, could prevent their crumbling. The efforts to carry by assault the great religions of Asia—Islamism, Brahmanism, Bouddhism—the bookish religion of China, have been futile: Africa does not seem to be turning to Christianity; just now, by a singular coincidence, it is from end to end going over to Islamism. As to the savage races, those sad survivors of an infant world, for whom nothing better can be wished than a quiet death, it is almost a derision to apply our dogmatic formulas to them. Before making Christians of them we should have to make them men, and it is doubtful if we should succeed in doing that. The poor Otabeitan is trained to attend mass or sermon, but the incurable softness of his brain is not remedied—he is only made to die of melancholy or of *ennui*. Oh! leave these lost children of nature to fade away on their mother's bosom; let us not, with our stern dogmas, fruit of twenty centuries of reflection, disturb their childish play, their dances by moonlight, their hour of sweet intoxication! The great mistake of the Jesuits, the idea that man gets his education from without, by

means of artificial processes and pious machinery, is at the bottom of all missions. They make Paraguays, toys for infants, and think they reproduce Eden!

Do we mean to say that all hope of increase is closed for Christendom? By no means. If we take the geographical limit of Christendom towards the year 1500, and compare it with what is now, we are struck by its vast accessions; but these accessions are not due to missions, they are due to the extension of the European race, in other words, to conquest and to colonization. In conquest and colonization lies the whole secret of the future of Christianity. We must consider which of the three Christian communions can hope for the greatest advantages from this source.

It cannot be denied that Protestantism exhibits a certain superiority here. The colonizing nations are almost all Protestant. Protestantism, by its tendency to individualism, the simplicity of its methods, its small need of alliance with the rest of Christianity, seems to be eminently the colonists' religion. With his Bible, the Englishman, in the depths of Oceanica, finds the religious nutriment which the Catholic cannot get, unless he has an official establishment of bishops and priests. M. Prevost de Paradol well says: "Of six men who, axe and gun in hand, penetrate the unexplored solitudes, set up their dwelling, soon build a city, establish a family there, and speedily a state, hardly one belongs to the Roman Church; and in most instances, if he does not leave it himself, he does not keep his children in it." It is estimated that if the Catholics emigrating to the United States had remained true to their faith, they would make a population of 7,500,000 souls; now the United States contain but 2,000,000 of Catholics, in spite of the annexation of Texas and California.

Protestantism, too, has profited by the best conquests that Christendom has made—the United States, Australia, the Dutch Indies, the Cape of Good Hope. Even Hindos-

tan and China have received vital seeds of Protestantism. Almost all Oceanica seems destined to become Protestant; and more significant still, those rich deposits of the Anglo-Saxon race thrown down at the world's end, colonize in their turn, and multiply with wonderful fecundity. That is a silent, stealthy conquest, whose results are incalculable. Still we should be mistaken if we thought that in this division of the earth by the race of Japhet, the two Orthodox Churches have not also, by force of policy, important conquests to achieve.

Russia, in fact, gains for the Greek Church numerous tribes of Northern and Central Asia; the Bouddhist populations appear likely thus to connect themselves with the Christian community. These conquests are effected without violence, and with a good deal of adroitness. China probably will receive from the same quarter a very powerful Christian accession. Finally, a few small schismatic communities of the East, the Armenians, for example, seem destined to join the Greco-Russian Church, as soon as they shall come forth from their isolation. We see what an enormous surface is thus opened to the family of Christendom, which at one moment seemed doomed to perish.

As to Catholicism, if its colonial future be less brilliant than that of Protestantism, we must guard against looking at it in that light alone. Of course, Spanish and Portuguese America, Canada, the Philippines, are not worth as much as the United States and Australia, but along the whole shore of the Mediterranean Rome may make important conquests. A Church that includes the mass of French people must necessarily have unforeseen triumphs in store for it, and receive more than one reflection of glory. The Christian schools, and the charitable establishments which the zeal of French Catholicism multiplies in the East, as if to fill up the frightful void in the heart that Islamism leaves, have a future. Moreover, there is one

element on which Catholicism has a much stronger hold than Protestantism, or even than the Greco-Russian Church; I mean the small communities of Christians, torn in pieces or floating, which the Greek Church, owing to its disasters, has been prevented from absorbing—the Abyssinians, Copts, Syrians, Armenians. Rome has advantages with these Churches, through her show of traditions, and will successfully often dispute their possession with Russia. The fidelity she has inspired in the Maronites, and the services she obtains from them, are a very characteristic fact. The abstract way in which Protestantism addresses these populations is not generally (we make one exception in favour of the beautiful American mission among the Nestorians of Armenia) the best calculated to insure a very solid success with Christian communities so degraded.

Let us leave these secular considerations, and return to the conscience; let us ask each of the three great Christian communities by what course of policy it intends to meet the exigencies of modern society, and what compromise it can offer between tradition and the new requirements of the human mind?

III.

Christianity has taken three positions in human societies which correspond very nearly, though not exactly, to the three families which the races of history have formed in its bosom. During the three centuries of its first struggle, Christianity, of course, asked nothing from the State; it managed its own affairs. Persecuted by the State, it triumphed by dint of patience, and compelled the State to sign a peace which, by a singular turn, was far more burdensome to it than to the State. Something in the nature of Christianity, it would seem, forbids its being simply free

and tolerated. The moment persecution ceases, it becomes a State religion. So powerfully organized was the mechanism of Rome, that, to become the State religion, was to become a function of the State. In fact, from the time of Constantine, in every part of the world which shared the fate of the old empire, the Church was under the rule of the State. The episcopal sees followed the divisions of the empire; the bishop of Constantinople—a modern see—became Pope of the East, because he was the Court bishop; which was much the same as it would be if the bishop of Versailles were to become Primate of the Gauls. The Greek Church, representing the old Roman-Byzantine tradition, has preserved the ineffaceable impress of it; Russia has inherited it, the Emperor there being supreme head of the religion. In the Christian communities under the dominion of Turkey, the Church, by an inverted but quite logical process, became the State; the Patriarch is an administrator of civil as well as of religious affairs, by appointment of the Sultan. The religion has become the nationality; or rather the formation of nationalities, in our sense of the term, has been made impossible in the East.

The West would, I imagine, have followed the same direction had the unity of the empire been preserved. The Byzantine world, in its decrepitude, shows us essentially what the empire of the West would have been but for the barbarians—a world deprived of liberty and of the sense of the infinite; but the Germans, by shattering the empire and founding distinct kingdoms, created better conditions for the Church. As each one of the kingdoms could not pretend to represent the Church universal, the Church and the State came to be thought of as two distinct things—the Church, more comprehensively than the State, taking up the Catholicity whose chief is the Pope.*

* Under Charlemagne and the Othos, who restore a sort of unity to the

The genius of the great Italian Popes of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, set a seal of marvellous splendour on this system; to it the West owes its irrevocable primacy. During the whole middle age the separation of the two powers is the condition of progress, the guarantee of a certain amount of liberty. To appreciate the value of it, we must cast a glance at Islamism. Islamism never knew a separation of the two powers; the Mussulman world perished in consequence. It had neither a John Chrysostom, a Gregory VII., nor a Thomas Becket. Some noble resistances of the Imams may be mentioned; but an independent clergy, jealous for its privileges, was never formed, for all that; no more either was a well defined civil State constituted in opposition to the religious order. If now the efforts of Turkey after a constitution based on the equality of rights, are vain, it is because she is struggling against a secular and fatal principle. Heir of the Khalifs, a vice-prophet—that is to say, the Sultan—can no more rule over a mixed State, in which believers and infidels have equal rights, than the Pope, if half his subjects were Jews or Protestants, could take them into the Roman congregations of the Sacred College. The battle between the priesthood and the empire has been, in a manner, the creative fact of modern times. Theocracy and absolute despotism have been rendered impossible. Had Islamism enjoyed this wholesome separation, a monster, like the Khalif Hakem, could not have appeared, and Arab science would not have been stifled by the worst fanaticism of all—the fanaticism of the laity.

To be sure, the *régime* of division between the two powers that ruled in the West, during the entire middle age, was very far from being a régime of liberty. The Latin

Western Empire, the Latin Church presents an aspect very similar to the Greek Church.

Church, much more independent than the Eastern, was no more exempt than that was from one sad evil consequent on the extreme vehemence with which Christianity pressed its divine truth; I mean intolerance. When it broke the old *State religion* of the Roman empire, Christianity put *absolute religion* in its place. Conscience acquired dignity by this; but violences, till then unheard of, resulted from this exaggerated dogmatism; and, by a strange reversal, this religion, whose victory had been the victory of conscience, turned out to be the religion that caused the greatest shedding of blood. The reason of it is simple: The Roman despotism had small care of souls; its religion was a police regulation, which meddled slightly with philosophic liberty. Christianity covets souls; externals do not satisfy it. Against consciences it carries fire and sword; hence the assaults whose vigour knew no bounds. The Roman empire never persecuted a single philosopher; the mediæval Christian stifled liberty of thought by atrocious penalties. Sovereigns, held up by the Church as models in the eyes of impartial history, look like pitiless butchers. I will not take as an example Philip II., who was at once a religious and a political tyrant—a true Domitian; I will take the most honest man, perhaps, who ever reigned—a genuine liberal, a sovereign who respected all rights, and whose goodness of heart has never been surpassed: St. Louis is a terrible persecutor in religion. So convinced is he of the truth of his creed, that he lays it down as a principle, that the only reply a layman should make to objections thrown out in his hearing against the faith—is a stab to the objector's heart!* Without the least scruple, he allows the horrible Dominican Inquisition to decimate his subjects by "incrimination" and the perpetual scaffold. Diocletian never did that. Under Diocletian such a thing was not seen as a

* See Joinville, *Recueil des Histoires des Gaules et de la France*, vol. xx. p. 198.

tribunal that pursued against the Christians legal processes as odious as that prescribed in Nicholas Eymeric's "Directorium Inquisitorium."* No Roman proconsul wrote a poem like the inquisitor Izarr's *Novelle de l'Heretique*, each argument of which ends with this threat, "and if thou wilt not believe see the lighted fire in which thy companions are burning," or else, "But already the fire and the torment thou must pass through are ready."† In one sense it may be said that theological persecution is Christianity's deed in the world. Islamism, much sterner in one aspect, never aimed at making converts. Its intolerance is that of disdain; it chokes the Christian, plunders him, massacres him in its moments of fury; but it does not preach at him, offering him his choice between syllogism and scaffold. Christianity, with its infinite tenderness for souls, has created the fatal type of spiritual tyranny, and has inaugurated in the world that frightful notion that man has a right over the opinions of his kind. The Church was not the State, but it forced the State to do its persecuting for her. If the secular arm executed the sentence, the priest pronounced it.

While denouncing as odious the persecutions of the empire which could not pretend to be practised in the name of the Truth, Western Christianity, in the middle age, was really an armed religion, violent, imperious, suffering no discussion. Such a system was better for the general morality of the human race than the Roman system, where the State made the religion, and than the Mussulman system

* The authentic accounts of these horrors, before which those of the revolutionary tribunal pale, are as yet but partially edited. The minutes of the trials before the Inquisition of Toulouse may be read in Limborch. Those of the Inquisition of Carcassonne are in the Imperial Library. (St Germain, latin, 395, &c.) The Directorium has been published.

† Histoire litteraire de la France, l. xix. p. 581.

where the religion made the State; but in fact it was more cruel than either, it made of Latin Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a field of tortures; it was in flagrant contradiction with the noble principles of which the Gospel kept the secret. A protest from the very heart of Christianity breaks out in the sixteenth century, a third type of Christian Society is constituted, and promises a return to the primitive liberty. To be sure, the pretension was not exactly justified then. Protestantism, besides many an act of violence it could reproach itself with, might seem at first to have been only a return to less pure ideas on the relations of Church and State. Lutheranism committed theology to the hands of German princes; Calvinism, in its ideal city of Geneva, founded a republic on religion. In England, in Sweden, official reform resulted in nothing but national Churches absolutely dependent on the civil power. Nevertheless, the new principle which was the hidden soul of the movement, the idea of a free Christianity which each one creates and carries in his heart, disengages itself by slow degrees. The dissenting sects in the bosom of reform, almost as vehemently persecuted by the established Protestant Churches as they had been by the Catholics, uphold and propagate this idea with a wonderful tenacity. In our day it shines triumphantly in every part of the Protestant world. A crowd of Christian societies having no bond either with a central Church or with the State, exist and grow. In America we see this system planted in constitutional law. Thus Protestantism, after three centuries of hesitation, is able to carry out the programme whose accomplishment it had prematurely announced. It has actually returned to the liberty of the early centuries, every trace whereof had disappeared from the day when Constantine began to meddle with theology. A Church free as in the first three centuries—as in America to-day;—a Church dependent on the State as in Russia, as in Swe-

den;—a Church separated from the State, centralized at Rome, and dealing with the State as power deals with power, as in the Catholic countries; such then are the three forms under which Christianity stands related to human society. Let us see which of these three forms seems best adapted to the tendencies of modern society towards an ideal of liberty, sweetness of manners, education and morality.

Without question we must rank lowest the system which makes the Church to be a function of the State. The effects of this system vary according to the character of the government to which the Church is subjected. Well enough in countries where the action of government is very much circumscribed, it is fatal in despotic countries. In Russia, it has resulted in excessive depression and servility. The Russian Church, humiliated, meagrely recruited, with no apparent germ of progress, drags along in the shoals of Christendom and almost at its extremity. No distinguished man can be named as having issued from its bosom. In Sweden the State Church exhibits a shocking intolerance and an imposing mediocrity. In England the Established Church, after having being a shameful persecutor at the close of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, reached long since a state of nothingness, sufficiently inoffensive. Routine and abuse reign there in perfect quiet; Oxford, till the remarkable movements of these few years past, rivalled Rome in the absence of criticism and the stubbornness of its bigotry. Happily seeds of a better future come to light here and there, and more than that, immense, unexampled, unequalled merit!—this official Church, rich, patronized by the State, supported by the majority of the people, does not persecute the dissenters; it is no obstacle to liberty! In the petty principalities of Germany the dependence of the Church, having produced in the seventeenth century an intellectual

condition that is completely effaced, has since wrought excellent results. Thanks to the breadth of the German mind, and to the remarkable intelligence of the German princes, towards the end of the last century and the beginning of this, thanks also, perhaps, to those rich speculative faculties by which Germany receives compensation for her want of political influence, the theological instruction in the German Universities has reached an elevation, a freedom, which no age has exhibited. The partition of Germany which made it Protestant bore here the usual fruit; in creating rivalry, it created light and liberty.

That is but one exception from which no inference can be drawn. In general, the subjection of the Church to the State is bad, and opposed to the real needs of the modern mind. In France, particularly, it would be fatal, and I deem wholly mistaken the opinion of very right-minded people, who seek in this direction a solution of incessantly recurring problems. The Gallican Church of Peter Pithou would have had all the defects of the Anglican Church, and would not, perhaps, have had its virtues. The petitions which the clerical assemblies of France addressed to the king, usually solicited acts of intolerance. I have no doubt that to-day a Gallican Church, dependent on the State, would be far more oppressive to liberty than the Church dependent on Rome. Better the Pope than the theological Emperor of Byzantium or Moscow. We remember those proud words: "I meant to exalt the Pope immeasurably, to surround him with pomp and homage. I would have made him cease to regret his temporalities. I would have idolized him. He should have lived near me; Paris should have become the capital of Christendom, and I would have directed the religious as well as the political world. It was a device for binding together all the federative parts of the empire, and for holding in the bonds of peace all that remained outside. I would have held my

religious as well as my legislative sessions. My councils would have represented Christendom; the popes would merely have presided at them. I would have opened and closed these assemblies, approved their decisions as Constantine and Charlemagne had done." I know no more serious danger than is implied in this scheme. Organized and centralized countries suffer the most terribly from a national church. Pius V. and Philip II. did not stay the modern spirit; administrative despotism would do so. This, indeed, need not be violent. Brutalities are not to be apprehended like those which were enacted in Judæa under Pontius Pilate, in Rome under Nero, in Europe in the sixteenth century. And yet, the liberty which must be assumed in the foundation of Christianity and reform no longer exists; simple regulations of the corrective police have rendered impossible these grand visions. M. Michelet has abundantly shown how the persecutions of skilful managers of Colbert's school, who had small love for the clergy, have struck to the victim's heart more surely than the coarse cruelty of the Spanish Inquisition. The hand of the state laid on the soul is always heavier than the hand of the priest. The priest prevents nothing from growing; the state, with its prudent gentleness, and its system of prevention, stops at the beginning everything grand. In the record of the past, I read of no single life of saintly or of noble man, that would not in our time be a constant irritation. Our laws touching the illegal practice of medicine, against assemblages, requiring previous authority in the matter of worship, would have been enough to cut short the two or three events to which the world owes its life and its progress.

France is proud of its *Concordat*, and in fact the *Concordat* is the last word of revolution in the religious order, as the civil code is its last word in the political order. It bears the stamp of everything that came from the revolution.

Essentially administrative, it evinces a remarkable understanding of the conditions of strength and peace in a nation, but at the same time a singular forgetfulness of liberty, a slender respect for individual conscience, and a complete disregard of the moral nature of man. The *Concordat* is expressed in this phrase, attributed to Portalis: "To regulate and restrain superstition." It is generally the mistake of France, to think that well compacted institutions can be a substitute for free spontaneity of souls. A frightful barbarism, *moralizer*, has crept into the French language, starting from the idea that a nation is happy as soon as it has a good code and a good administration, conceding to the individual one solitary right—that of amusing himself according to his taste—without ideas, without opinions, without anything that can disturb the happiness of the vulgar. The politicians who draw the last inferences from the revolution, must be brought to regard religious beliefs as an inevitable evil, to be restrained by wise legislative enactments. But humanity has too much fire in its blood to be satisfied with the Eden of a comfortable citizen, amusing himself at tea parties, living and dying by routine, believing by decree. The religious sentiment will have its revenge; worship will prefer the perils of liberty to a protection secured by the loss of all it holds dearest, the right of doing battle, and of feeling that it is dependent only on itself and the truth.

In short, the national church system seems to us to have no future to speak of. The narrow conception of truth it supposes, conflicts with the tendency of the French mind towards an ideal that is universal and common to all. It takes the patriotic optimism of the Englishman to imagine that the church of his island must be the best, because it is his. The religious sentiment aims more and more at ignoring rivers and mountains. A central administration, like that of the Court of Rome, would be, besides, much more

accessible to certain ideas of progress, than little churches, controlled by an incurable routine. Till the eighteenth century, Rome played in Catholicism the part of a capital more enlightened than the provinces. Berengar, Abelard, Roger Bacon, found more support or tolerance in the papacy than in the local ecclesiastical authorities. Did any local church contribute so much to the revival of letters as the Roman pontificate of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? What a time was that, when the discovery of a Latin author was a passport to the papacy or to a cardinalate? Think of the incomparable largeness of mind implied in popes like Thomas de Sarzane, Æneas Silvius, Julius II., Leo X.; in apostolic secretaries like Poggio Aretino (Leonardo Bruni), Bembo, Sadolet? In the eighteenth century even, no national church possessed a Benedict XIV., the correspondent of Voltaire, a Clement XIV., a Passionei, a Stephen Borgia. The papacy, profiting by the rare qualities of the Italian mind, by its tact, by its skill, by its practical knowledge of life, has had, altogether, a wider horizon than any local church. If this is no longer the case, it is because papal Rome is no longer an Italian centre. Neo-Catholic French, Belgians, Irish, set the fashion there, and speak a language which the Mai, the La Somaglias would not understand.

From the fact that the Catholic system is preferable to the arrangement of National Churches dependent on the state, must we conclude that such a system represents the highest religious type of our age? Not by any means. The Ultramontane notion of a religious power centralized in a capital, holding that capital and the dependent provinces in full sovereignty, treating with states as one power treats with another, over the heads of the local clergy, involves, in my judgment, difficulties which will declare themselves. In fact, a fatal logic has led Catholicism to strengthen its centre more and more, and to make all power

converge thither. More and more have Catholics been brought to think that they derive life and salvation from Rome. It is especially worth remarking that the new Catholic conquests exhibit the most sensitiveness on this point. The old provincial Catholic, whose faith belongs to the soil, has less need of the Pope, and is much less alarmed at the storms that menace him than the new Catholic who, coming fresh to Catholicism, regards the Pope, after the new system, as the author and defender of his faith. There is thus a disposition to establish a sort of Lamaism, or faith in a perpetual incarnation of the truth. By an odd coincidence the mightiest auxiliary of these modern exaggerations is he who has seemed their most formidable enemy. That the Pope is in the Church what the Emperor is in the state, that he rules the Church by bishops as the emperor rules the state by governors, that to treat with him is to treat with the Church, as to treat with the Emperor is to treat with the state, is an idea of Napoleon. It is the essence of the *Concordat*. Had Gregory VII. been asked if he believed himself possessed of the power to cancel a whole Church by a stroke of the pen, and the next day to reconstruct it according to the views of a temporal sovereign, he would have answered in the negative. The theologians of what is called the Low Church would produce invincible arguments to the same purpose. The *Concordat* is a thing unheard of in church history ; it is the most enormous act of Ultramontanism that the Papacy ever allowed itself to commit. The bishop who, in the old canonical institutions, holds his authority by divine right, is but a governor who may be deposed, even without being in fault, when the good of the community requires that he should be. The Pope, who has but a loosely defined primacy in the ancient Church, becomes the administrator-general of church affairs. The constitution of the dioceses, as distinct Churches, is radically

affected; their interior connexions may be altered at the pleasure of the supreme director; they have henceforth a purely factitious existence, like that of a department. Thus the principle of administration in France makes a complete inroad into the Church. The Pope becomes the actual sovereign of the Church; all the rights which the ancient constitution distributed throughout the ecclesiastical body are gathered up in his hand.

It is easy to see the dangers of such an organization. Experience proves that centralized powers are the least stable; a blow of the hand is sufficient to sweep them away. In states thus constituted changes are wrought by revolution. With centralization, fragility and revolution have made their way into the Church. The Pope is far more vulnerable than a well distributed Church. The Pope, besides, being, by the system of *Concordats*, put in direct relation with the ruling powers, religion is brought back within the circle of worldly things; it is mixed up in every earthly intrigue; its representative is no longer the pontiff, the man of holiness, the teacher; he sits among the diplomats, the Consalvi, the Caprara. The Pope, in the first half of the middle age, was, to be sure, very much implicated in worldly affairs, but as one of the prime actors, yes, even as the chief of all. Deprived of this supreme position, since the fourteenth century, representing on the earth a second or third rate power, the Pope of our time is reduced to human expedencies that are quite unworthy of him. Catholicism has been seduced into becoming a religion essentially political; the Jesuits, who have marked out its diplomatic code, have alone understood the exigencies of its position, and the line of conduct it was doomed to follow.

Injurious to religion, the Ultramontane system is no less injurious to the state. It is no superficial prejudice that in certain countries has opposed to each other the words

Catholic and *patriot*, and has made them the badges of conflicting parties. Catholicism is, in fact, the believer's country, far more than is the land of his birth. The stronger a religion is the more effective it is in this way. Islamism has completely killed love of country in the East. Europe is not exposed to such a danger; but it cannot be denied that Ultramontane Catholicism does seriously embarrass civil society. As religion in the Ultramontane system is a distinct power, having worldly means at its disposal, the state is obliged to make perpetual concessions to her. These concessions always abridge the public liberty. Taking its position as a power divinely instituted, which those even who are not members of it must obey, the Church, when she does not rule, thinks herself persecuted. In claiming common justice, she is right; but, in fact, she enjoys an enormous privilege, which she owes to stately charms. The bishop complains that he does not enjoy full liberty to publish his mandates; I am with him in that crusade; but why will not the bishop allow the same liberty to the freethinker? Why does he insist that the state shall prohibit the teaching of opinions differing from his own? If the bishop leans on the state, he must not take it amiss that the state leans on him. If he demands of the state that nothing contrary to his opinions shall be spoken in the public chairs, he must not find fault if the state revises his decrees, to see that they contain nothing opposed to its policy. It is against nature that the clergy should be compelled to receive bulls from Rome through diplomatic channels; but it must be remembered that the Pope is a sovereign, and that his Nuncio is an ambassador. For the state to force the priest to sing *Te Deum*, and to prosecute him when he refuses to pray, is absurd; but it is to be borne in mind that this priest derives an immense privilege from the state; that directly or indirectly his power, his wealth, his past rule, and the beautiful remains

of it that are left to him, are due to the state, which for ages secured his exclusive monopoly. Be free, and welcome; but then let all be free! Do not ask the state to declare that you possess the truth; defend yourself without calling on the state to meet your adversaries; demand of it one thing only, a thing which all are entitled to—liberty to believe what you think true, and to impart your conviction to others by means acknowledged to be strictly equitable.

That, I know, is a sacrifice that cannot be made. Catholicism, persuaded that it works for the truth, will always endeavour to enlist the state in its defence, or in its spread. The formation of a *Catholic party*, pledged to use its influence in the Church interest, to support or attack governments according as they serve or do not serve its religious faith, is the inevitable consequence of the Ultramontane system. This party, which is not wanting in talent or in skill, has already half a century of history; it has always been talking of liberty; can it be said that this grand word has always been the rule of its conduct? Has it, the day after its victory, kept the fine resolutions to be tolerant, that it made when it was weak? When the Catholic party, in the two or three years following the Revolution of 1848, reached a position of the highest influence, did it show much regard for its adversaries? Did it think that one day all those laws it passed might be applied to itself? The *Concordat* of Austria and that of the Grand Duchy of Baden, both its work, are they liberal achievements? It approved of Belgium's revolt against Holland; it approved of the separation of Ireland; what does it say of the insurrection of the Romagna? Yet it is certain that the treaties of 1815 were hardly less violated in the one case than in the other. It very justly abhors terrorism; but it apologizes for Pius V., and for the order of Saint Dominic; it rouses itself against tyranny, but does it with

an audible voice blame the Church for making alliance with every despotism that has served its turn from Philip down to this or that nameless President of the American Republics? We are assured that there shall be in the future no more of this. God grant it! For the rest, little do we care; we hold liberty by its own right, not by another's allowance. We must desire for others the same liberty we would like ourselves, but we must expect from ourselves alone the liberty we need, and which is our right.

One circumstance, in particular, complicates these difficulties still more. Like all centralized states, Ultramontane Catholicism must have a capital. A certain portion of the earth's surface must be withdrawn from all the conditions of national life, to serve as territory for it to govern, and as an abode for its sovereign. The superiority of Protestantism in this regard is immense. Protestant unity is wholly spiritual; it needs not an inch of ground for the establishment of a centre. No Protestant ever asked that a village of the tenth rank should be sacrificed for the peace of his soul. Reposing, not on communion with a chief, but on faith in a book, and ultimately on the pure idea of Christ, the soul of the Protestant is beyond the reach of the revolutions and the hazards of history. This complete emancipation from space, this absolute spiritualism admitting no attachment to any terrestrial point, is unattainable by Ultramontane Catholicism. That cannot dispense with a material establishment; it must have a patrimony, an army, a treasury, a diplomacy, a policy. It enters fully into the current of passing affairs, clearly it must submit to the law which regulates them. It builds on the crumbling soil of our planet, and it must feel all the shocks. Before Ultramontanism can promise itself an eternal career, it must be assured that the corner of the earth on which it has built its holy city will never tremble,

and that the people it has made its own will not only remain for ever Catholic, but will never claim the right to live like other nations. It must have a city in the clouds; an inaccessible peak, out of the way of troublesome neighbours. Let us see if the country where, by virtue of subtle theological deductions, and, above all, in consequence of rigorous historical necessities, Catholicism has planted itself, unites all these conditions.

That country is Italy. Catholicism met with a happy fortune there; and Italy, on its part, attained a brilliant and peculiar destiny, which became a burden and an injury to it only after revolution had brought changes into the movement of the world; but four important facts got introduced, half a century ago, into the order of Europe, and rendered exceedingly difficult the maintenance of the isolation of Italy, that essential condition of the old Papal organization. These four facts are: The prominence assumed by the principle of nationalities; the exclusive preponderance arrogated to themselves by the great states; the profound transformation of the Papacy itself; the revolution in the religious sentiment, which has gone on in all sects without distinction.

The rights of nationalities may be carried to excess in the different applications which our age is inclined to make of it; but certain it is that the principle of territorial division, founded on the very nature or the needs of the people, is gradually taking the place of divisions founded on the convenience of princes. Now, the grandeur of the Papacy consists precisely in its being outside of nationality, and above it; in its being a universal mechanism, in its exacting, consequently, the sacrifice of the nationality whose soil it occupies. If the Pope is Italian, he will not be Catholic; if he is Catholic, he will not be Italian. The logic of history is here inflexible. With an evidence which only minds unwonted to general views can overlook, it

shows us the Papacy, ever since the Lombardic period, casting insurmountable obstacles in the way of an organized kingdom of Italy. I make no account here of contemporary events, whose character is still quite undecided, and whose immediate consequences cannot be measured. The Roman Church glories in despising passing storms. I will admit, then, if you choose, that the attempt at Italian nationality, even under the mildest form, is doomed to a succession of defeats; and that Peter, strong in Catholic support, will tread ten times more on the asp and the basilisk; but I do see clearly that every one of these victories will be fatal to him, that every one of them digs a pit into which the Vatican will plunge; for populations never die, and institutions do; institutions perish through their victories, and populations triumph through their defeats. A duel to the death is fighting, in which one of the combatants, although the feeblest, and perpetually beaten to the earth, cannot be slain. As an inevitable result the other must be. Every attempt to strangle its enemy costs the Papacy pledges, compromises, compacts with worldliness, which will be disastrous to it in the long run, and will deprive it of the very last particle of that independence which it claimed on the ground of its possessing a small principality.

A difficulty far more serious than that which results from the uprising of nationalities encounters the Papal temporality at this point. The independence of the Papacy was sufficiently guaranteed by its supremacy over three or four millions of men at a period when the small States were of some consequence. When the republic of Venice was a power much respected in Europe, and offered resistance to the King of France, the Sovereign of Rome and of Bologna was a considerable personage in the temporal order wholly aside from his religious prestige. This is the case no longer, now that four or five immense groups have

monopolized the administration of European affairs. In such a state of things the necessary position of the petty sovereigns is easily seen. If it can be said, as certainly it cannot without many reservations, that for the four or five grand powers sovereignty is synonymous with independence, it is very clear that the petty sovereign is the most dependent of men. When this petty sovereign falls out with his subjects, what is to be said? Clearly in this case he depends on the nation that takes care of him, or on the nation he leans on as defence against the nation that takes care of him. Better be the free subject of one Power than be thus by turns a debtor to all powers. To organize a Catholic army is no solution of this difficulty. A Catholic army, like everything chivalric in our leaden age, would break down before the fatal force of huge masses. Russia with her sixteen millions of men, and her military institutions, is hardly strong enough to figure among the great States; she occupies an awkward position in the European alliance. If Catholicism can form an army like the French army, a navy like the English navy, I have nothing to say; but who does not see that the national principle alone is able to keep up these gigantic preparations? I will add that the politic party in Rome, which, reckoning little on miracles, has always paid court to established powers rather than rely on religious enthusiasm, will put no faith in the Catholic army, will neutralize its effects, and will in preference turn to diplomacy. By the inevitable course of things, the Pope will then be compelled to ask of the great powers a guarantee for his States, to lie in wait for success, to covenant with the strong, to plunge into a labyrinth of human calculations. Not from his little principality then does he derive his independence; on the contrary his principality is the nail by which he is pinned to the earth, and made over to the tribunal of the European powers, the majority of whom are schismatics and heretics. I add

further, that one grand element of power, legitimacy, cannot here be invoked. Legitimacy is grounded in a sort of secular marriage between a royal house and a nation, the royal house pledging itself to strict observance of the hereditary descent, and renouncing all private interest apart from the welfare of the nation. In the case before us, there is neither hereditary house nor national interest; the Papacy is no more allowed to claim the rights of a dynasty than is the dogate of Venice, and as to the interests it represents, they long ago ceased to have the least connexion with the country over whose surface it rules, but for whose benefit it does not govern. Charged with a universal mission, the Pope would fail in his duty as the common father of the faithful, were he to consider merely the weal of his little principality, that is to say, were he a good sovereign.

The exaggerations that our age has introduced into the idea of the Pope's spiritual and temporal sovereignty, have given frightful proportions to this difficulty. Italy clung to the Papacy as long as the Papacy was Italian, and allowed it its favourite government,—the municipality. Had there been an attempt in the eighteenth century to snatch the Papacy from Italy she would have defended it with all her might. Things are unalterably changed in this respect. On one side, the Papacy becomes more and more Catholic as an administration whose patronage is in the hands of foreigners. On the other, a narrow idea of direct and executive sovereignty has taken the place in Rome of the old idea of superiority which gave the Pope a more dignified and fitting position. By a false judgment, whose consequences will last through our generation, Consalvi laid down the principle that the sovereignty of the Pope over the States conceded to him in 1815 was a full sovereignty, analogous to that of the King of France, and implying abolition of the ancient franchises. This was really

a monstrous usurpation, for in 1796 Bologna was a veritable republic owning but a nominal fealty to Rome; but it was the fault of the time; it would seem that in overthrowing the empire, they undertook to perpetuate everywhere with the same rigour, but not the same splendour, the governmental system which the empire had inaugurated. The idea of the Napoleonic sovereignty became in 1815 the basis of public law in Europe; Germany retained its petty princes in complete sovereignty; the restoration retained the prefectorial régime; the Pope and the Sultan were declared absolute Kings over the countries assigned to them on the map. Rome and Constantinople committed the same fault. On one side it resulted in the massacre of the Christians; on the other, in the revolutionizing of the Roman States, and especially of the Romagna. Really, the Pope, I mean to cast on him no serious reproach, will never be a good governor; the government of States descends to contemptible details in which the old Roman majesty must be compromised. Formerly the Pope escaped this responsibility through the undefined nature of his power; the Pope of the nineteenth century had but one way of escaping it; namely, by accepting the constitutional régime. He would not do that, and to be just, we must ask if he could do it? Far be it from me to overlook the generosity of an attempt, which gained the devotion of noble hearts; but I confess, glad enough should I be to have my apprehension dispelled,—that the theory of a Papacy administering temporal affairs in parliamentary fashion seems to me hard to carry out. In some respects such a theory may be said even to contradict the essential principles, not of the ideal Papacy, but of the exaggerated Papacy which is created by the maxims of modern Ultramontanism. I very well understand a Pope who is feudal suzerain of free provinces or protector of small republics; a constitutional Pope, at least a Pope with a system of

central representation, I do not understand so well. Is there no cause to fear that this priest, who must be made a sovereign in order that he need not be submitted to some other sovereign, may be submitted to his subjects? Will not this Catholic whose conscience rebels at the idea that he who in his eyes represents the truth should undergo external restraint, rebel a great deal more when his infallible and impeccable chief is dependent on a purely secular chamber, and is pliant before his cabinet.

Finally, as religion is yearning in our age to confine itself more and more to the soul, the fatal attachment to the earth, implied in the new ultramontane system, will become extremely distasteful to heartily religious people. They will come to see actual infidelity in this distrust of the value of divine aid. There are independencies wholly human, that manage to sustain themselves without possessing a foot of land. Why should not he who is aided by the power and wisdom of heaven, be as brave as they? At the bottom of the judgments which Catholics pass on these points, lies a false idea of sovereignty; they begin with the assumption that one cannot be subject and free at the same time; that a sovereign is of necessity a Louis XIV., owning bodies and souls at once. Let the Catholics join us in the endeavour to make it otherwise now. Instead of basing the independence of the faith on stone walls, let them toil to insure liberty to all, and to reduce the rights of the State in spiritual things. Let the Pope's action be confined to strictly religious concerns, and no government will attempt to molest him on that ground. The Augsburg Confession needs no sovereign representative to sustain it; it is defended by the common faith of its adherents.

From all sides, then, we come to this result: that the establishment of Catholicism, based on the everlasting alienation of one portion of Italy, cannot be maintained. The imprudence of Catholicism in this excessive centralization will

appear with frightful clearness. The day will be cursed when Cæsar Borgia gave to the papacy the provinces he had conquered by the admirable policy of Machiavelli. Oh! standard-bearer of the holy church, a sad present you made her! There will be regret for those mean terms which rendered inconsistency possible and easy. It will be acknowledged that an Italian principality was a poor device for maintaining the independence of religion. Thus Catholicism will be forced to choose the direct appeal to conscience, in preference to a protectorate. On one side it will be strong enough to render impossible a national church, under direction of the State; on the other side, it will be too weak to defend its central organization. There will remain for it the condition of a powerful free association, reposing on a universally distributed moral force. The day it accepts that condition, the church with earnest good faith will call for liberty, and great services will liberty render her, for sore is her need. I hope that no true liberal will sarcastically remind her of the time when she asserted her divine right to rule; when she treated every dissenter as a rebel, and repudiated equality of rights as an outrage on the truth.

God forbid that I should ever seem to overlook the grandeur of Catholicism, or the part she has taken in the battle which our poor humanity wages against darkness and evil. What virtue yet gushes in the troubled waters of that inexhaustible fountain, at which humanity so long has drunk life and death! Even in this age of decay, and in spite of faults pushed to extreme with unequalled stubbornness, Catholicism gives proof of an amazing vigour. How fruitful its missions of charity! How many excellent souls among those believers who suck from her breasts the milk and honey, leaving to others the wormwood and the gull! In sight of those tents ranged on the plain, through which Jehovah still walks, how strongly we are tempted, with the

unbelieving prophet, to bless him they would have us curse—and to exclaim, “How beautiful thy pavilions! how charming thy dwellings!” Notwithstanding the hard limits that Catholicism imposes on human development in some directions, how many minds which, without religious convictions, would have remained sunk in vulgarity or ignorance, owe their awakening to her. Where can we find anything more venerable than Saint Sulpice, that living image of the ancient customs, that school of conscience and virtue, where we take Francis of Sales, Vincent de Paul, Fenelon, by the hand? Even in that sometimes rather stupid association of Catholicism with the relics of the old French society, in this somewhat sickish new Catholicism, what an air of distinction still abides! What an atmosphere of purity and sincerity! What ingenuous efforts to do good! Ah! we must be careful how we think that God has left that old church for ever. She will renew her youth like the eagle; she will flourish again like the palm; but the fire must purify her; her earthly supports must be broken; she must repent of having trusted too much in the flesh; she must efface from her proud basilica the *Christus regnat, Christus imperat*, till she is not ashamed to occupy in the world a position whose grandeur is apparent only to the eyes of the spirit.

IV.

The world will ever be religious, and Christianity, in a large sense, is religion's last word. Christianity is susceptible of unlimited transformation. Every official organization of Christianity, whether under the form of a National Church, or under the form of ultramontaniam, is destined to disappear. A free and individual Christianity, with innumerable interior diversities, like that of the first three

centuries, seems to us then the religious future of Europe. Equally deceived are they who think that religion is destined gradually to lose its importance in the affairs of the world, and they who see all religion terminate at last in a sort of deism. Religion is a thing *sui generis*; the philosophy of the schools will never take its place. Deism, which pretends to be scientific, is no more so than religion; it is an abstract mythology, but a mythology it is. It must have miracles; its God providentially intervening in the world does not differ essentially from Joshua's, who stays the sun. Besides, rigid, dry dogmas, with no plastic quality or traditional character, offering no field to the interpreter, imprison the human mind more closely than the popular mythology does. Herder, Fichte, Schleiermacher, were not orthodox enough to be professors of natural religion, according to Voltaire; they were excellent theologians. The religious, undogmatical principle that Jesus proclaimed will unfold itself eternally, with an infinite flexibility, producing symbols more and more elevated, and in every case, according to the different stages of human culture, creating formulas suited to each man's capacity.

I know that to many people a solution like this will appear visionary, and they would be right if we were speaking of taking measures, or of reforming legislation; but the great transformations of humanity are not effected in that way. The regulation of worship may remain as it is as long as you please; the philosopher is only interested to know the direction in which the world is going, to see clearly the consequences involved in actual facts. Now, if there is one principle immutably fixed, it is that liberty and individuality are the domain of the soul. The two great powers of modern Europe, French democracy and English understanding, are agreed on this point. The opposite ideas are linked to parties that have no future. The whole Faubourg Saint-Germain, with its oracle, M. de

Maistre, has less weight in the world than a few Manchester Quakers. How would you have those Christians that are buried in the depths of America and Oceanica preserve the same bond of obedience to old Rome, the mother of us all, that they have who owe to her civilization and faith? Free Christianity alone is eternal and universal. The idea of a spiritual as opposed to a temporal power must be modified. To be sure, the spiritual is not the temporal, but the spiritual does not constitute a *power*, it constitutes a *liberty*. If there was such a thing as a spiritual power on earth, Gregory VII. would have been justified in his boldest paradoxes; the kingdom of souls would have been everything, the kingdom of bodies would have been little or nothing. Really, the kingdom of souls exists only in the region of souls; that is to say, in the world of pure ideas. Liberty in the material order is limited; I am debarred from my neighbour's field, justly and necessarily, that he may not encroach on mine; but my neighbour does me no wrong by holding his own peculiar opinions on God, the world, and society, for in holding these opinions he deprives me of no portion of my right to hold opposite ones. The Church, meaning by this word a power armed with other weapons than those of free persuasion, ought therefore to disappear, not for the good of the state, but for the sake of liberty. As long as religion shall be the official establishment, it will be better that the two authorities should be distinct than united; but the ideal to be aimed at is precisely a pure rule of the spirit, not as fanatics and sectarians understand it, but as it is understood by the true liberals, who are convinced that no belief is precious till it is seized by personal conviction, that no religious act is meritorious till it is spontaneous.

Without controversy, Protestantism makes the nearest approach to this ideal. Detaching itself by degrees from the state, Protestantism in our time reaches its final

conclusion, which is the free organization of religion, and the union of Christians, not in a dead, symbolical form, but in the pure religious idea, as the Gospel first gave it utterance. Except for the almost ridiculous reaction represented in Prussia, by the *party of the cross*, Protestantism in England, France, Holland, Switzerland, makes visible progress daily in this direction. The Reformed Churches of France, in particular, are passing through a crisis, the issue of which is intensely interesting to the philosopher and the religious man. Compelled to close up for better resistance, these Churches have until recently been bound in the severe creed of Calvinism. Religious expansion is the fruit of a long peace. We must not ask the sons of martyrs to criticize the doctrines for which their fathers suffered. Broad statements cannot defend themselves, and do not absorb the entire man sufficiently to carry him through a hundred and fifty years of proscription. French Protestantism, therefore, claimed to be judged not by what it had become under the blows of odious persecutions, but by what it might have become if it had remained free. A half century of liberty has sufficed to give it its natural direction. As early as the period of the Reformation, a pastor of Nîmes, Samuel Vincent, though little acquainted with Germanic Christianity, outspoke with rare firmness views on the nature of religious credence that have since become axioms. Later, an influence from higher studies, proceeding principally from Strasbourg, revived the tradition of the learned reformed schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The whole body of French Protestants will understand at last that if theirs is not a free religion it will have no justification for its existence; that the age will not become Calvinistic, it will not quit the Church for the Bible, nor the Council of Trent for the creed of La Rochelle. The old dogmatic and national Protestantism may yet render good service as the nurse of

enlightened men ; but as a special sect it cannot look forward to a great future.

Catholicism, with its haughty audacity of assertion, and its exaggerated notion of its rights, will not so easily submit to change. It will undergo protracted mutilations before it will renounce its earthly reign, its anti-Christian khalifate. Frankly, I confess it seems to me difficult to avoid a schism between the opposing elements in the bosom of Catholicism itself. The political party engrossed more and more by intrigues, and the earnest party more and more chilled by the exclusive reliance on human means, will discover at length that they do not worship the same God. The slightest misunderstanding that might arise on the death of a Pope, if skilfully fostered—as a careful perusal of the first two pages of the history of the great Western schism would show—might bring the internal dissension to an open rupture. Every great crisis in religion is preceded by a series of timid attempts, in which the thought of the future agitates a few sweet souls, and in which the reformers, humble men as yet, submit to the Church which condemns them. In such a period we live. Lamennais's outbreak was an isolated fact due to his Breton rudeness, which always rushes into excess. The docility of the Lacordaires and the Montalemberts will stand out against all trials. Measure the space that has elapsed between Joachim of Flôris and Luther, including Peter John d'Oliva, Tauler, Conecte, Savonarola ; we have the whole period that is necessary to change a Saint into a Heresiarch. It is true that mankind moves with great rapidity in our age ; but long is the patience of pious souls ; two generations at least must pass before Rosmini or Montalembert can be ancestor to a schismatic.

I must anticipate one objection that may be urged against me. "You would revive religion," men will say, "and you desire to withdraw it from State direction and

yet, you would not have it an organized power which can force the State to take it into account; do you not see that you degrade it, that when it is no longer a State affair, it will sink to the level of opinions in literature or art, to which government pays no heed because they are beneath its attention? Do not you who know the conditions of liberty perceive that you are beating down its last tower of defence? What! in our dismantled society, you applaud the ruin of the last feudal castle? You do not consider that this castle may one day be the sole asylum for souls that will not bend before the terrible tribunitial power of the State? In short, amid the universal abasement of Europe, amid the silence created by universal subjugation, who has resisted? Who has spoken? The Pope, the Bishops. Equality affords no protection; the code gives shelter to nobody. Had old Rome had priests of noble character, had the pontifical power, instead of being absorbed by the Emperor, succeeded in creating bishops, the imperial despotism would have been impossible. Liberty is a result of privilege; why are you unwilling that the Church should have its own?" I am not unwilling, forsooth, if I may be permitted to have mine against it; but has not the fault of the Church been precisely this, that she more than anybody has appealed to the State principle to stifle all dissent in the name of national unity? Who more than the Church has called in that formidable auxiliary against those whom it counted her enemies? Is not the extravagant idea of the State that prevails in France, is not the difficulty of establishing there a constitutional regime, in part the work of Catholicism? Is not this idea that the things with which the State has no concern are for that reason less noble things, the very evil to be combated, and does not a considerable portion of the State's action consist in giving to many social interests the needful protection against the inevitably encroaching ten-

dencies of the Church? Leave to the Church its feudal organization, provided you set up completely the system of free organizations; provided you allow other Churches, other organizations of all kinds, to be formed with equal rights; otherwise the injustice is flagrant. An officially established Church may be a condition of liberty in a country already free; but such an establishment in a despotic country is, on the contrary, injurious to liberty. Far from excluding each other, as M. de Tocqueville, a sagacious publicist in other respects, believes, political liberty and freedom of thought suppose each other; and if a choice were to be made, I even confess my preference for the second, for one may be an accomplished man in a country which enjoys no political liberty, and without religious and philosophical liberty one can be but a very imperfect man.

The religious question, then, finds its solution in liberty, all the more that this is not the solution of moral, social, political, industrial questions. The reason for this is simple. The end of religion is good; now, the good which is not obtained through liberty is not good. Religion is a problem which the mind raises by self-application; the true and excellent religion for each man is that which he believes and loves. The liberal principle, pre-eminently, is, that man is a soul, that he is to be reached only through the soul, that nothing is of value save as it effects a change in the soul. An inflexible justice, granting with inexorable firmness liberty to all, even to those who, were they masters, would refuse it to their adversaries, is the only issue that reason discovers for the grave problems raised in our time. I am inclined to believe that if, in 1849, socialistic errors had been met simply by a passive liberalism, the dangerous poison which the repressive measures then taken forced back into the social system, would have lost all its force. Many a misery would have been exorcised,

and heavy shackles imposed on the rights of all would be loosed.

Religion will gain more than anything else by this régime. Gross associations of ideas, exceedingly injurious to the elevation of souls, will fall of themselves. The synonymy between libertine and freethinker, fixed by the hypocrites at the close of the reign of Louis XIV., will disappear. This confusion is a common effect of official Catholicism; it is a sad thought that but for the support of the village libertine, embroiled with his curate, the revolution of the eighteenth century, which laid the foundation of intellectual independence, would not have been accomplished. The example of Italy, hovering between materialism and devotion ever since the middle age, devoured at once by religion and by incredulity, paralysed by Catholicism, and knowing no way of escape from it, cannot be censured enough. In a word, the proud indifference of the Paduan Averrhoism, which seemed such good policy in the sixteenth century, was a blunder. The exclusive power of a religion is not combated by false protestations of respect. The only way to do that is by the unwearied appeal to liberty.

Dogmatism which thinks it has the everlasting formula of truth, scepticism which denies the truth, will always be two treacherous guides in the direction of religious affairs. Nothing that is human is contemptible, but nothing either is to be absolutely embraced. The conditions of civilization are like those of a limited problem, where each postulate pushed to extremity leads to the impossible. No one should touch rashly these essential conditions of the human mean, wherein one degree of heat more or less produces life or death. Often, in this order of things, what looks like evil is the mainspring which sustains the rest. Every prejudice is an error, and yet the prejudiced man is greatly superior to the nullity, the man without character, whom

our age of indifference has produced. Every abuse is blameworthy, nevertheless society lives on abuses. Every dogmatic assertion inclosed in fixed phrase is objectionable, still, the day when mankind shall cease to affirm it will cease to exist. Every religious form is imperfect, notwithstanding that religion cannot exist without form. Only in its quintessence is it true, and yet to refine on it too much is to destroy it. The philosopher who, struck by the prejudice, the abuse, the error contained in the form, thinks to get at the truth by taking refuge in abstraction, substitutes for reality something that never existed. He is the wise man who sees at once that all is image, prejudice, symbol, and that the image, the prejudice, the symbol are necessary, useful, and true. Dogmatism is presumption, for if, in fine, among the millions of men who have, one after another, believed themselves in possession of the truth, not one has been wholly right, how can we hope to be more fortunate? But, as we do not reproach a painter with puerile absurdity because he represents the ideal under finite forms, so we may admit and love the symbol that once has lived in the conscience of humanity. Without looking for absolute perfection, which closely embraced would be nothingness, we may believe that an immense career is open to reason and to liberty. The problem of the true and the just is like that of squaring the circle, approach it as nearly as you can, you will never reach it.

For ever breached by one portion of the human soul, religion will for ever, therefore, resist, sustained by the other portion. Were religion simply a mistake of mankind, like astrology, sorcery, and other chimæras that have commanded general belief for centuries, science would already have swept it away, as it has consigned to the lower regions of society the belief in spirits and sorcerers. On the other hand, were religion only the fruit of a childish calculation, by which man hopes to receive on the other side of the

tomb a return for his virtuous investments here below, he would be attracted to it particularly in his selfish moments. Now, it is in their best moments that men are religious; it is when they are good that they are persuaded that virtue corresponds to the eternal order; it is when they contemplate things disinterestedly that they find death abhorrent and absurd. Must we not suppose that in these moments man's vision is the clearest? Which is right, the selfish and dissipated or the good and self-possessed man? If, as the Italian sophists of the sixteenth century maintained, religion had been invented by the simple and the weak, how comes it that the finest natures are precisely the most religious? Let us, then, boldly say that religion is the product of the normal man, that man is most truly himself when he is most religious, and is surest of an infinite destiny; but let us dismiss all absolute confidence in the images which serve to express this destiny, and let us believe solely that the real fact must be far above all that feeling is permitted to desire, or fancy to paint.

Perhaps something will occur here analogous to that which has occurred in the physical sciences. At first it might well be thought that modern science, by destroying the primitive system which represented natural phenomena as the work of free agents, was going to destroy the beauty of the universe, and reduce everything to a flat realism without mystery. Many a tender soul bewailed that world of enchantment in which ignorant humanity lived, that world where everything was moral, passionate, full of life and feeling. Science, it was apprehended, would belittle this world. In fact, it has infinitely enlarged it. The most extravagant looking ideas of antiquity turned out to be narrow, tame, puerile, when compared with the reality. The earth like a disk, the sun big as the Peloponnesus, the stars rolling a few leagues overhead in the grooves of a solid vault, an enclosed universe, surrounded with walls,

hooped like a chest,* behold the most splendid system of the world then conceivable. Who would venture to sigh after it in presence of that revealed by science? Is not the mechanical hypothesis of Newton more noble than that of angels moving the spheres? Is not the history of the globe, as geology presents it to us, more poetical than the world that was manufactured five thousand years ago? Let us dare to believe that the system of the moral world is likewise superior to all our symbols. Let us not bewail the childish chimæras of the childish epochs. Dream always fades before reality. Let us allow inflexible science to assail with the utmost vigour of its method these problems which sentiment and imagination solved ages ago. Who knows that the metaphysics and the theology of the past will not hold the same relation to those which the advance of speculation will one day reveal, that the Cosmos of Anaximenes or of Indicopleustes holds to the Cosmos of Laplace and Humboldt?

* See the Study of M. Letroune, on Cosmos Indicopleustes, and the Opinions on Cosmography of the Church Fathers. "Revue" of 15 March, 1834.

THE END.



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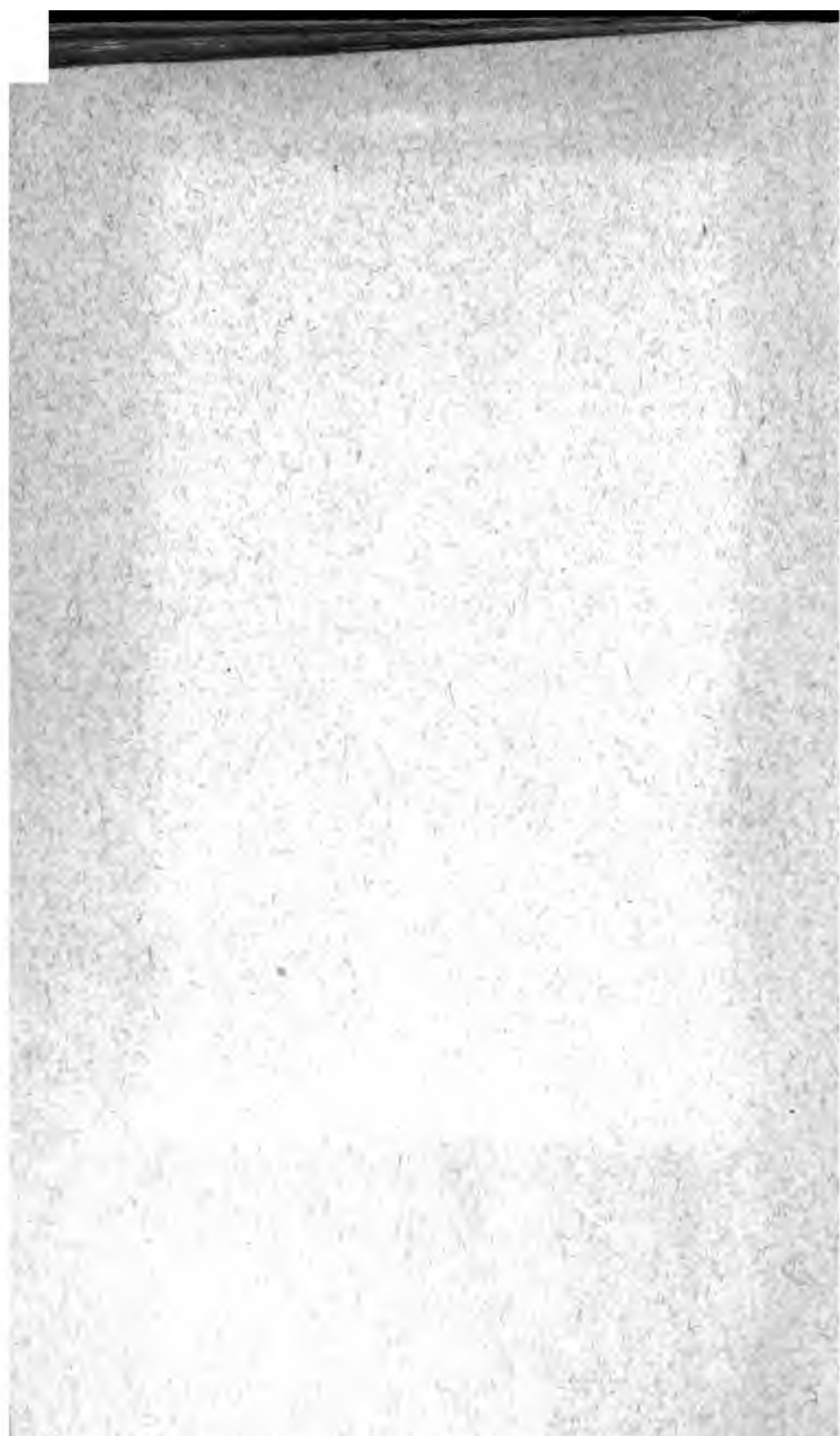
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